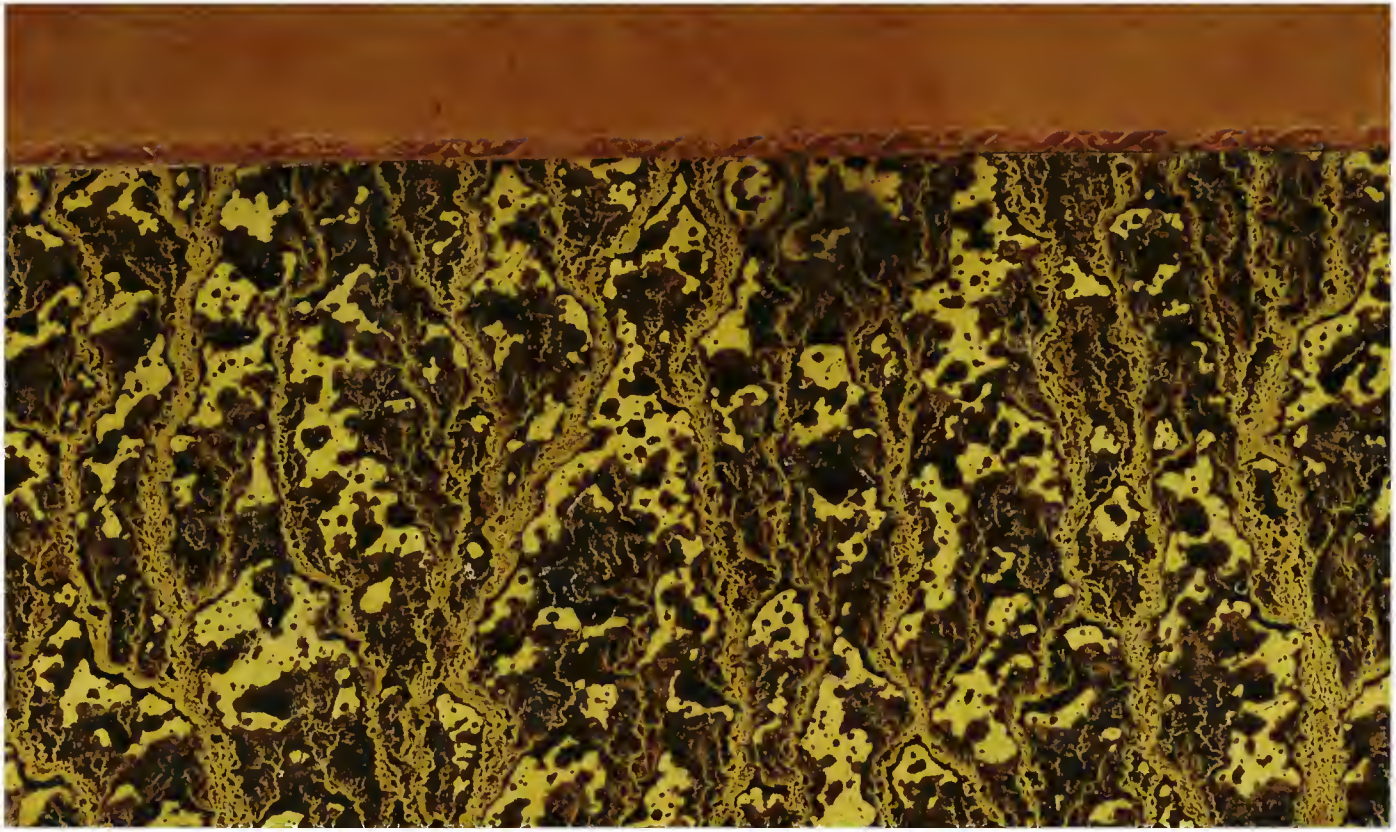

CONINGSBY;

OR, THE

NEW GENERATION.

BY

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CONINGSBY.

BOOK IV.

CHAPTER I.

A GREAT city, whose image dwells in the memory of man, is the type of some great idea. Rome represents Conquest; Faith hovers over the towers of Jerusalem; and Athens embodies the pre-eminent quality of the antique world—Art.

In modern ages, Commerce has created London; while Manners, in the most comprehensive sense of the word, have long found a

supreme capital in the airy and bright-minded city of the Seine.

What Art was to the ancient world, Science is to the modern: the distinctive faculty. In the minds of men the useful has succeeded to the beautiful. Instead of the city of the Violet Crown, a Lancashire village has expanded into a mighty region of factories and warehouses. Yet rightly understood, Manchester is as great a human exploit as Athens.

The inhabitants indeed are not as impressed with their idiosyncrasy as the countrymen of Pericles and Phidias. They do not fully comprehend the position which they occupy. It is the philosopher alone who can conceive the grandeur of Manchester, and the immensity of its future. There are yet great truths to tell, if we had either the courage to announce or the temper to receive them.

CHAPTER II.

A FEELING of melancholy, even of uneasiness, attends our first entrance into a great town, especially at night. Is it that the sense of all this vast existence with which we have no connexion, where we are utterly unknown, oppresses us with our insignificance? Is it that it is terrible to feel friendless where all have friends?

Yet reverse the picture. Behold a community where you are unknown, but where you will be known, perhaps honoured. A place where you have no friends, but where also you have no enemies. A spot that has hitherto been a blank in your thoughts, as you have been a cipher in its sensations, and yet a spot perhaps pregnant with your destiny!

There is perhaps no act of memory so profoundly interesting as to recall the careless mood and moment in which we have entered a town, a house, a chamber, on the eve of an acquaintance or an event, that have given a colour and an impulse to our future life.

What is this Fatality that men worship? Is it a Goddess?

Unquestionably it is a power that acts mainly by female agents. Women are the Priestesses of Predestination.

Man conceives Fortune, but Woman conducts it.

It is the Spirit of Man that says, "I will be great;" but it is the Sympathy of Woman that usually makes him so.

It was not the comely and courteous hostess of the Adelphi Hotel, Manchester, that gave occasion to these remarks, though she may deserve them, and though she was most kind to our Coningsby as he came in late at night very tired, and not in very good humour.

He had travelled the whole day through the great district of labour, his mind excited by

strange sights, and at length wearied by their multiplication. He had passed over the plains where iron and coal supersede turf and corn, dingy as the entrance of Hades, and flaming with furnaces; and now he was among illumined factories with more windows than Italian palaces, and smoking chimneys taller than Egyptian obelisks. Alone in the great metropolis of machinery itself, sitting down in a solitary coffee-room glaring with gas, with no appetite, a whirling head, and not a plan or purpose for the morrow, why was he there? Because a being, whose name even was unknown to him, had met him in a hedge ale-house during a thunder storm, and told him that the Age of Ruins was past.

Remarkable instance of the influence of an individual; some evidence of the extreme susceptibility of our hero.

Even his bed-room was lit by gas. Wonderful city! That however could be got rid of. He opened the window. The summer air was sweet, even in this land of smoke and toil. He feels a sensation such as in Lisbon or Lima

precedes an earthquake. The house appears to quiver. It is a sympathetic affection occasioned by a steam-engine in a neighbouring factory.

Notwithstanding however all these novel incidents, Coningsby slept the deep sleep of youth and health, of a brain, which however occasionally perplexed by thought, had never been harassed by anxiety. He rose early, freshened and in fine spirits. And by the time the deviled chicken and the buttered toast, that mysterious and incomparable luxury, which only can be obtained at an inn, had disappeared, he felt all the delightful excitement of travel.

And now for action! Not a letter had Coningsby, not an individual in that vast city was known to him. He went to consult his kind hostess, who smiled confidence. He was to mention her name at one place, his own at another. All would be right; she seemed to have reliance in the destiny of such a nice young man.

He saw all; they were kind and hospitable to thc young stranger, whose thought, and earnestness, and gentle manners, attracted them.

One recommended him to another; all tried to aid and to assist him. He entered chambers vaster than are told of in Arabian fable, and peopled with habitants more wondrous than Afrite or Peri. For there he beheld, in long-continued ranks, those mysterious forms full of existence without life, that perform with facility and in an instant, what man can fulfil only with difficulty and in days. A machine is a slave that neither brings nor bears degradation: it is a being endowed with the greatest degree of energy and acting under the greatest degree of excitement, yet free at the same time from all passion and emotion. It is therefore not only a slave, but a supernatural slave. And why should one say that the machine does not live? It breathes, for its breath forms the atmosphere of some towns. It moves with more regularity than man. And has it not a voice. Does not the spindle sing like a merry girl at her work, and the steam-engine roar in jolly chorus like a strong artizan handling his lusty tools, and gaining a fair day's wages for a fair day's toil?

Nor should the weaving-room be forgotten, where a thousand or fifteen hundred girls may be observed in their coral necklaces working like Penelope in the day time; some pretty, some pert, some graceful and jocund, some absorbed in their occupation; a little serious some, few sad. And the cotton you have observed in its rude state, that you have seen the silent spinner change into thread, and the bustling weaver convert into cloth, you may now watch as in a moment it is tinted with beautiful colours, or printed with fanciful patterns. And yet the mystery of mysteries is to view machines making machines; a spectacle that fills the mind with curious, and even awful, speculation.

From early morn to the late twilight, our Coningsby for several days devoted himself to the comprehension of Manchester. It was to him a new world pregnant with new ideas, and suggestive of new trains of thought and feeling. In this unprecedented partnership between capital and science, working on a spot which Nature had indicated as the fitting theatre of their exploits, he beheld a great source of the wealth

of nations which had been reserved for these times, and he perceived that this wealth was rapidly developing classes whose power was very imperfectly recognised in the constitutional scheme, and whose duties in the social system seemed altogether omitted. Young as he was, the bent of his mind, and the inquisitive spirit of the times, had sufficiently prepared him, not indeed to grapple with these questions, but to be sensible of their existence, and to ponder.

One evening, in the coffee-room of the hotel, having just finished his well-earned dinner, and relaxing his mind for the moment in a fresh research into the Manchester Guide, an individual, who had also been dining in the same apartment, rose from his table, and after lolling over the empty fire-place, reading the framed announcements, looking at the directions of several letters waiting there for their owners ; picking his teeth, he turned round to Coningsby and with an air of uneasy familiarity, said,

" First visit to Manchester, sir ?"

" My first."

" Gentleman traveller, I presume ?"

"I am a traveller," said Coningsby.

"Hem!—From the south?

"From the south."

"And pray, sir, how did you find business as you came along. Brisk? I dare say. And yet there is a something, a sort of a something; didn't it strike you, sir, there was a something? A deal of queer paper about, sir!"

"I fear you are speaking on a subject of which I know nothing," said Coningsby, smiling, "I do not understand business at all; though I am not surprised that being at Manchester you should suppose so."

"Ah! not in business. Hem! Professional?"

"No," said Coningsby, "I am nothing."

"Ah! an independent gent; hem! and a very pleasant thing, too. Pleased with Manchester, I dare say?" continued the stranger.

"And astonished," said Coningsby, "I think in the whole course of my life I never saw so much to admire."

"Seen all the lions, have no doubt?"

"I think I have seen everything," said Coningsby, rather eager and with some pride.

"Very well, very well," exclaimed the stranger in a patronising tone. "Seen Mr. Burley's weaving-room, I dare say."

"Oh! isn't it wonderful?" said Coningsby.

"A great many people," said the stranger, with a rather supercilious smile.

"But after all," said Coningsby with animation, "it is the machinery without any interposition of manual power that overwhelms me. It haunts me in my dreams," continued Coningsby, "I see cities peopled with machines. Certainly Manchester is the most wonderful city of modern times!"

The stranger stared a little at the enthusiasm of his companion, and then picked his teeth.

"Of all the remarkable things here," said Coningsby, "what on the whole, sir, do you look upon as the most so?"

"In the way of machinery?" asked the stranger.

"In the way of machinery."

"Why, in the way of machinery, you know," said the stranger very quietly, "Manchester is a dead letter."

"A dead letter!" said Coningsby.

"Dead and buried," said the stranger, accompanying his words with that peculiar application of his thumb to his nose, that signifies so eloquently that all is up.

"You astonish me!" said Coningsby.

"It's a booked place though," said the stranger, "and no mistake. We have all of us a very great respect for Manchester, in course; look upon her as a sort of mother, and all that sort of thing. But she is behind the times, sir, and that won't do in this age. The long and short of it is, Manchester is gone by."

"I thought her only fault might be she was too much in advance of the rest of the country," said Coningsby very innocently.

"If you want to see life," said the stranger, "go to Staley-bridge or Bolton. There's high pressure."

"But the population of Manchester is increasing," said Coningsby.

"Why, yes, not a doubt. You see we have all of us a great respect for the town. It is a sort of metropolis of this district, and there is

a good deal of capital in the place. And it has some first-rate Institutions. There's the Manchester Bank. That's a noble institution, full of commercial enterprise; understands the age, sir; high-pressure to the back-bone. I came up to town to see the manager to-day. I am building a new mill now myself at Staley-bridge, and mean to open it by January, and when I do, I'll give you leave to pay another visit to Mr. Burley's weaving-room with my compliments."

"I am very sorry," said Coningsby, "that I have only another day left; but pray tell me, what would you recommend me most to see within a reasonable distance of Manchester?"

"My mill is not finished," said the stranger, musingly; "and though there is still a great deal worth seeing at Staley-bridge, still you had better wait to see my new mill. And Bolton, let me see, Bolton—there is nothing at Bolton that can hold up its head for a moment against my new mill; but then it is not finished. Well, well, let us see. What a pity this is not the 1st of January, and then my new mill would be at work. I should like to see Mr. Burley's

face, or even Mr. Ashworth's that day. And the Oxford Road Works, where they are always making a little change, bit by bit reform, eh! not a very particular fine appetite I suspect for dinner at the Oxford Road Works, the day they hear of my new mill being at work. But you want to see something tip-top. Well there's Millbank; that's regular slap-up—quite a sight, regular lion; if I were you, I would see Millbank."

"Millbank!" said Coningsby; "what Millbank?"

"Millbank of Millbank, made the place, made it himself. About three miles from Bolton; train to-morrow morning at 7-25, get a fly at the station, and you will be at Millbank by 8-40."

"Unfortunately I am engaged to-morrow morning," said Coningsby, "and yet I am most anxious, particularly anxious, to see Millbank."

"Well, there's a late train," said the stranger, "3-15; you will be there by 4-30."

"I think I could manage that," said Coningsby.

"Do," said the stranger; "and if you ever find yourself at Staley-Bridge, I shall be very happy to be of service. I must be off now. My train goes at 9-15." And he presented Coningsby with his card as he wished him good night.

MR. G. O. A. HEAD.

STALEY BRIDGE.

CHAPTER IV.

In a green valley of Lancaster, contiguous to that district of factories on which we have already touched, a clear and powerful stream flows through a broad meadow land. Upon its margin, adorned, rather than shadowed, by some very old elm trees, for they are too distant to serve except for ornament, rises a vast deep red brick pile which, though formal and monotonous in its general character, is not without a certain beauty of proportion and an artist-like finish in its occasional masonry. The front which is of great extent, and covered with many tiers of small windows, is flanked by two pro-

jecting wings in the same style, which form a large court, completed by a dwarf wall crowned with a light and rather elegant railing; in the centre, the principal entrance, a lofty portal of bold and beautiful design, surmounted by a statue of Commerce.

This building, not without a degree of dignity, is what is technically and not very felicitously called a mill; always translated by the French in their accounts of our manufacturing riots, "moulin"; and which really was the principal factory of Oswald Millbank, the father of that youth, whom we trust our readers have not quite forgotten.

At some little distance, and rather withdrawn from the principal stream, were two other smaller structures of the same style. About a quarter of a mile further on, appeared a village of not inconsiderable size, and remarkable from the neatness and even picturesque character of its architecture, and the gay gardens that surrounded it. On a sunny knoll in the back ground rose a church in the best style of Christian architecture, and near it was a clerical

residence and a school-house of similar design. The village too could boast of another public building; an Institute where there were a library and a lecture-room; and a reading hall which any one might frequent at certain hours, and under reasonable regulations.

On the other side of the principal factory, but more remote, about half-a-mile indeed up the valley, surrounded by beautiful meadows, and built on an agreeable and well-wooded elevation was the mansion of the mill-owner; apparently a commodious and not inconsiderable dwelling-house, built in what is called a villa-style, with a variety of gardens and conservatories. The atmosphere of this somewhat striking settlement was not disturbed and polluted by the dark vapour, which to the shame of Manchester still infests that great town, for Mr. Millbank who liked nothing so much as an invention, unless it were an experiment, took care to consume his own smoke.

The sun was declining when Coningsby arrived at Millbank, and the gratification which he experienced on first beholding it was not a little

diminished, when on inquiring at the village, he was informed that the hour was past for seeing the works. Determined not to relinquish his purpose without a struggle, he repaired to the principal mill, and entered the counting-house, which was situated in one of the wings of the building.

"Your pleasure, sir?" said one of three individuals sitting on high stools behind a high desk.

"I wish, if possible, to see the works."

"Quite impossible, sir," and the clerk withdrawing his glance, continued his writing. "No admission without an order, and no admission with an order after two o'clock."

"I am very unfortunate," said Coningsby.

"Sorry for it, sir. Give me ledger K. X., will you Mr. Benson?"

"I think, Mr. Millbank would grant me permission," said Coningsby.

"Very likely, sir; to-morrow. Mr. Millbank is there, sir, but very much engaged." He pointed to an inner counting-house, and the

glass doors permitted Coningsby to observe several individuals in close converse.

"Perhaps his son, Mr. Oswald Millbank is here?" inquired Coningsby.

"Mr. Oswald is in Belgium," said the clerk.

"Would you give a message to Mr. Millbank, and say a friend of his son's at Eton is here, and here only for a day, and wishes very much to see his works?"

"Can't possibly disturb Mr. Millbank now, sir; but, if you like to sit down, you can wait and see him yourself."

Coningsby was content to sit down, though he grew very impatient at the end of a quarter of an hour. The ticking of the clock, the scratching of the pens of the three silent clerks, irritated him. At length voices were heard, doors opened, and a clerk said: "Mr. Millbank is coming, sir," but nobody came; voices became hushed, doors were again shut; again nothing was heard, save ticking of clock and scratching of pen.

At length there was a general stir, and they

all did come forth, Mr. Millbank among them, a well-proportioned, comely man, with a fair face inclining to ruddiness, a quick, glancing, hazel eye, the whitest teeth, and short, curly, chestnut hair, here and there slightly tinged with grey. It was a visage of energy and decision.

He was about to pass through the counting-house with his companions with whom his affairs were not concluded, when he observed Coningsby, who had risen.

"This gentleman wishes to see me?" he inquired of his clerk, who bowed assent.

"I shall be at your service, sir, the moment I have finished with these gentlemen."

"The gentleman wishes to see the works, sir," said the clerk.

"He can see the works at proper times," said Mr. Millbank, somewhat pettishly; "tell him the regulations," and he was about to go.

"I beg your pardon, sir," said Coningsby, coming forward, and with an air of earnestness and grace that arrested the step of the manufacturer. "I am aware of the regulations, but would beg to be permitted to infringe them."

"It cannot be, sir," said Mr. Millbank, moving.

"I thought, sir, being here only for a day, and as a friend of your son—"

Mr. Millbank stopped and said:

"Oh! a friend of Oswald's, eh? What, at Eton?"

"Yes, sir, at Eton; and I had hoped perhaps to have found him here."

"I am very much engaged, sir, at this moment," said Mr. Millbank; "I am sorry I cannot pay you any personal attention, but my clerk will show you everything. Mr. Benson, let this gentleman see everything," and he withdrew.

"Be pleased to write your name here, sir," said Mr. Benson, opening a book, and our friend wrote his name and the date of his visit to Millbank.

"HARRY CONINGSBY, SEPT. 2, 1836."

Coningsby beheld in this great factory the last and the most refined inventions of mechanical genius. The building had been fitted up by a capitalist as anxious to raise a monument of

the skill and power of his order, as to obtain a return for the great investment.

"It is the glory of Lancashire!" exclaimed the enthusiastic Mr. Benson.

The clerk spoke freely of his master, whom he evidently idolized, and his great achievements, and Coningsby encouraged him. He detailed to Coningsby the plans which Mr. Millbank had pursued both for the moral and physical well-being of his people; how he had built churches, and schools, and institutes; houses and cottages on a new system of ventilation; how he had allotted gardens; established singing classes.

"Here is Mr. Millbank," continued the clerk, as he and Coningsby, quitting the factory, re-entered the court.

Mr. Millbank was approaching the factory, and the moment that he observed them, he quickened his pace.

"Mr. Coningsby?" he said when he reached them. His countenance was rather disturbed, and his voice a little trembled, and he looked on our friend with a glance scrutinizing and serious. Coningsby bowed.

"I am sorry that you should have been received at this place with so little ceremony, sir," said Mr. Millbank; "but had your name been mentioned, you would have found it cherished here." He nodded to the clerk, who disappeared.

Coningsby began to talk about the wonders of the factory, but Mr. Millbank recurred to other thoughts that were passing in his mind. He spoke of his son: he expressed a kind reproach that Coningsby should have thought of visiting this part of the world without giving them some notice of his intention, that he might have been their guest, that Oswald might have been there to receive him, that they might have made arrangements that he should see everything and in the best manner in short, that they might all have shown however slightly, the deep sense of their obligations to him.

"My visit to Manchester, which led to this was quite accidental," said Coningsby. "I am bound for the other division of the county, to pay a visit to my grandfather, Lord Monmouth, but an irresistible desire came over me during

my journey to view this famous district of industry. It is some days since I ought to have found myself at Coningsby, and this is the reason why I am so pressed."

A cloud passed over the countenance of Millbank as the name of Lord Monmouth was mentioned, but he said nothing. Turning towards Coningsby, with an air of kindness:

"At least," said he, "let not Oswald hear that you did not taste our salt. Pray dine with me to-day; there is yet an hour to dinner; and as you have seen the factory, suppose we stroll together through the village."

CHAPTER IV.

THE village clock struck five as Mr. Millbank and his guest entered the gardens of his mansion. Coningsby lingered a moment to admire the beauty and gay profusion of the flowers.

"Your situation," said Coningsby, looking up the green and silent valley, "is absolutely poetic."

"I try sometimes to fancy," said Mr. Millbank, with a rather fierce smile, "that I am in the New World."

They entered the house; a capacious and classic hall, at the end a staircase in the Italian fashion. As they approached it, the sweetest and the clearest voice exclaimed from above:

"Papa! papa!" and instantly a young girl came bounding down the stairs, but suddenly seeing a stranger with her father she stopped upon the landing place and was evidently on the point of as rapidly retreating as she had advanced, when Mr. Millbank waved his hand to her and begged her to descend. She came down slowly: as she approached them her father said: "A friend you have often heard of Edith: this is Mr. Coningsby."

She started; blushed very much; and then, with a trembling and uncertain gait, advanced, put forth her hand with a wild unstudied grace, and said in a tone of sensibility: "How often have we all wished to see and to thank you!"

This daughter of his host was of tender years; apparently she could scarcely have counted sixteen summers. She was delicate and fragile, but as she raised her still blushing visage to her father's guest, Coningsby felt that he had never beheld a countenance of such striking and such peculiar beauty.

"My only daughter, Mr. Coningsby; Edith; a Saxon name, for she is the daughter of a Saxon."

But the beauty of the countenance was not the beauty of the Saxons. It was a radiant face, one of those that seem as if touched in their cradle by a sunbeam, and to have retained all its brilliancy and suffused and mantling lustre. One marks sometimes such faces, diaphanous with delicate splendour, in the southern regions of France. Her eye too was the rare eye of Acquitaine; soft and long, with lashes drooping over the cheek, dark as her clustering ringlets.

They entered the drawing-room.

"Mr. Coningsby," said Millbank to his daughter, "is in this part of the world only for a few hours, or I am sure he would become our guest. He has, however, promised to stay with us now and dine."

"If Miss Millbank will pardon this dress," said Coningsby, bowing an apology for his inevitable frock and boots; the maiden raised her eyes and bent her head.

The hour of dinner was at hand. Millbank offered to show Coningsby to his dressing-room. He was absent but a few minutes. When he returned he found Miss Millbank alone. He

came somewhat suddenly into the room. She was playing with her dog, but ceased the moment she observed Coningsby.

Coningsby, who since his practice with Lady Everingham, flattered himself that he had advanced in small talk, and was not sorry that he had now an opportunity of proving his prowess' made some lively observations about pets and the breeds of lap-dogs, but he was not fortunate in extracting a response or exciting a repartee. He began then on the beauty of Millbank, which he would on no account have avoided seeing, and inquired when she had last heard of her brother. The young lady, apparently much distressed, was murmuring something about Antwerp, when the entrance of her father relieved her from her embarrassment.

Dinner being announced, Coningsby offered his arm to his fair companion, who took it with her eyes fixed on the ground.

"You are very fond, I see, of flowers," said Coningsby, as they moved along; and the young lady said, "Yes."

The dinner was plain, but perfect of its kind.

The young hostess seemed to perform her office with a certain degree of desperate determination. She looked at a chicken and then at Coningsby, and murmured something which he understood. Sometimes she informed herself of his tastes or necessities in more detail, by the medium of her father, whom she treated as a sort of dragoman; in this way: "Would not Mr. Coningsby, papa, take this or that, or do so and so?" Coningsby always was careful to reply in a direct manner without the agency of the interpreter; but he did not advance. Even a petition for the great honour of taking a glass of sherry with her only induced the beautiful face to bow. And yet when she had first seen him, she had addressed him even with emotion. What could it be? He felt less confidence in his increased power of conversation. Why Theresa Sydney was scarcely a year older than Miss Millbank, and though she did not certainly originate like Lady Everingham, he got on with her perfectly well.

Mr. Millbank did not seem to be conscious of his daughter's silence: at any rate, he attempted to compensate for it. He talked

fluently and well; on all subjects his opinions seemed to be decided, and his language was precise. He was really interested in what Coningsby had seen, and what he had felt; and this sympathy divested his manner of the disagreeable effect that accompanies a tone inclined to be dictatorial. More than once Coningsby observed the silent daughter listening with extreme attention to the conversation of himself and her father.

The dessert was remarkable. Millbank was very proud of his fruit. A bland expression of self-complacency spread over his features as he surveyed his grapes, his peaches, his figs.

"Those grapes have gained a medal," he told Coningsby. "Those two are prize peaches. I have not yet been so successful with my figs. These however promise, and perhaps this year I may be more fortunate."

"What would your brother and myself have given for such a dessert at Eton!" said Coningsby to Miss Millbank, wishing to say something, and something too that might interest her.

She seemed infinitely distressed, and yet this time would speak:

"Let me give you some." He caught by chance her glance immediately withdrawn; yet it was a glance not only of beauty, but of feeling and thought. She added, in a hushed and hurried tone, dividing very nervously some grapes: "I hardly know whether Oswald will be most pleased or grieved when he hears that you have been here."

"And why grieved?" said Coningsby.

"That he should not have been here to welcome you, and that your stay is for so brief a time. It seems so strange that after having talked of you for years, we should see you only for hours."

"I hope I may return," said Coningsby, "and that Millbank may be here to welcome me; but I hope I may be permitted to return even if he be not."

But there was no reply; and soon after Mr. Millbank talking of the American market, and Coningsby helping himself to a glass of claret, the daughter of the Saxon, looking at her father,

rose and left the room, so suddenly and so quickly that Coningsby could scarcely gain the door.

"Yes," said Millbank filling his glass, and pursuing some previous observations, "all that we want in this country is to be masters of our own industry; but Saxon industry and Norman manners never will agree; and some day, Mr. Coningsby, you will find that out."

"But what do you mean by Norman manners?" inquired Coningsby.

"Did you ever hear of the Forest of Rossendale?" said Millbank. "If you were staying here, you should visit the district. It is an area of twenty-four square miles. It was disforested in the early part of the sixteenth century, possessing at that time eighty inhabitants. Its rental in James I's time was £120. When the woollen manufacture was introduced in the north, the shuttle competed with the plough in Rossendale, and about forty years ago, we sent them the Jenny. The eighty souls are now increased to upwards of eighty thousand, and the rental of the forest, by the last county

assessment, amounts to more than £50,000. 41,000 per cent. on the value in the reign of James I. Now I call that an instance of Saxon industry competing successfully with Norman manners."

"Exactly," said Coningsby, "but those manners are gone."

"From Rossendale," said Millbank, with a grim smile; "but not from England."

"Where do you meet them?"

"Meet them! In every place, at every hour; and feel them too in every transaction of life"

"I know, sir, from your son," said Coningsby, inquiringly, "that you are opposed to an aristocracy."

"No, I am not. I am for an aristocracy; but a real one, a natural one."

"But, sir, is not the aristocracy of England," said Coningsby, "a real one? You do not confound our peerage for example with the degraded patricians of the continent."

"Hum!" said Millbank. "I do not understand how an aristocracy can exist, unless it be distinguished by some quality which no other

class of the community possesses. Distinction is the basis of aristocracy. If you permit only one class of the population, for example, to bear arms, they are an aristocracy; not one much to my taste; but still a great fact. That, however, is not the characteristic of the English peerage. I have yet to learn they are richer than we are, better informed, wiser, or more distinguished for public or private virtue. Is it not monstrous then that a small number of men, several of whom take the titles of Duke and Earl from towns in this very neighbourhood, towns which they never saw, which never heard of them, which they did not form, or build, or establish, I say is it not monstrous, that individuals so circumstanced should be invested with the highest of conceivable privileges—the privilege of making laws? Dukes and Earls indeed! I say there is nothing in a masquerade more ridiculous."

"But do you not argue from an exception, sir," said Coningsby. "The question is, whether a preponderance of the aristocratic principle in a political constitution be, as I believe, conducive

to the stability and permanent power of a state, and whether the peerage, as established in England, generally tends to that end. We must not forget in such an estimate the influence which, in this country, is exercised over opinion by ancient lineage."

"Ancient lineage!" said Mr. Millbank; "I never heard of a peer with an ancient lineage. The real old families of this country are to be found among the peasantry; the gentry, too, may lay some claim to old blood. I can point you out Saxon families in this county who can trace their pedigrees beyond the Conquest; I know of some Norman gentlemen whose fathers undoubtedly came over with the Conqueror. But a peer with an ancient lineage is to me quite a novelty. No, no; the thirty years of the wars of the Roses freed us from those gentlemen. I take it after the Battle of Tewkesbury, a Norman baron was almost as rare a being in England as a wolf is now."

"I have always understood," said Coningsby, "that our peerage was the finest in Europe."

"From themselves," said Millbank, "and

the heralds they pay to paint their carriages. But I go to facts. When Henry VII. called his first parliament, there were only twenty-nine temporal peers to be found, and even some of them took their seats illegally, for they had been attainted. Of those twenty-nine not five remain, and they, as the Howards for instance, are not Norman nobility. We owe the English peerage to three sources: the spoliation of the church; the open and flagrant sale of its honours by the elder Stuarts; and the boroughmongering of our own times. Those are the three main sources of the existing peerage of England, and in my opinion disgraceful ones. But I must apologize for my frankness in thus speaking to an aristocrat."

"Oh! by no means, sir; I like discussion. Your son and myself at Eton have had some encounters of this kind before. But if your view of the case be correct," added Coningsby, smiling, "you cannot at any rate accuse our present peers of Norman manners."

"Yes I do. They adopted Norman manners while they usurped Norman titles. They have

neither the right of the Normans, nor do they fulfil the duty of the Normans: they did not conquer the land, and they do not defend it."

"And where will you find your natural aristocracy?" asked Coningsby.

"Among those men whom a nation recognizes as the most eminent for virtue, talents, and property, and if you please, birth and standing in the land. They guide opinion; and therefore they govern. I am no leveller; I look upon an artificial equality as equally pernicious with a factitious aristocracy; both depressing the energies, and checking the enterprise of a nation. I like man to be free; really free; free in his industry as well as his body. What is the use of Habeas Corpus, if a man may not use his hands when he is out of prison?"

"But it appears to me you have, in a great measure, this natural aristocracy in England."

"Ah! to be sure! If we had not, where should we be? It is the counteracting power that saves us: the disturbing cause in the calculations of short-sighted selfishness. I say it now, and I have said it a hundred times, the

House of Commons is a more aristocratic body than the House of Lords. The fact is, a great peer would be a greater man now in the House of Commons than in the House of Lords. Nobody wants a second chamber, except a few disreputable individuals. It is a valuable institution for any member of it who has no distinction; neither character, talents, nor estate. But a peer who possesses all or any of these great qualifications, would find himself an immeasurably more important personage in what, by way of jest, they call the Lower House."

"Is not the revising wisdom of a senate a salutary check on the precipitation of a popular assembly?"

"Why should a popular assembly elected by the flower of a nation, be precipitate? If precipitate, what senate could stay an assembly so chosen? No, no, no; the thing has been tried over and over again; the idea of restraining the powerful by the weak is an absurdity; the question is settled. If we wanted a fresh illustration, we need only look to the present

state of our own House of Lords. It originates nothing; it has, in fact, announced itself as a mere Court of Registration of the decrees of your House of Commons; and if by any chance it ventures to alter some miserable detail in a clause of a bill that excites public interest, what a clatter through the country, at conservative banquets, got up by the rural attorneys, about the power, authority, and independence of the House of Lords; nine times nine, and one cheer more! No, sir, you may make aristocracies by laws; you can only maintain them by manners. The manners of England preserve it from its laws. And they have substituted for our formal aristocracy an essential aristocracy; the government of those who are distinguished by their fellow-citizens."

"But then it would appear," said Coningsby, "that the remedial action of our manners has removed all the political and social evils of which you complain?"

"They have created a power that may remove them; a power that has the capacity to remove them. But in a very great measure they

still exist; and must exist yet, I fear, for a very long time. The growth of our civilization has ever been as slow as our oaks; but this tardy development is preferable to the temporary expansion of the gourd."

"The future seems to me sometimes a dark cloud."

"Not to me," said Mr. Millbank. "I am sanguine; I am the Disciple of Progress. But I have cause for my faith. I have witnessed advance. My father has often told me that in his early days, the displeasure of a peer of England was like a sentence of death to a man. Why it was esteemed a great concession to public opinion, so late as the reign of George II, that Lord Ferrers should be executed for murder. The King of a new dynasty who wished to be popular with the people insisted on it, and even then he was hanged with a silken cord. At any rate we may defend ourselves now," continued Mr. Millbank, "and perhaps do something more. I defy any peer to crush me, though there is one who would be very glad to do it. No more of that; I am very happy

to see you at Millbank; very happy to make your acquaintance," he continued with some emotion, "and not merely because you are my son's friend and more than friend."

The walls of the dining-room were covered with pictures of great merit; all of the modern English school. Mr. Millbank understood no other, he was wont to say, and he found that many of his friends who did, bought a great many pleasing pictures that were copies, and many originals that were very displeasing. He loved a fine free landscape by Lee, that gave him the broad plains, the green lanes, and running streams of his own land; a group of animals by Landseer as full of speech and sentiment as if they were designed by Æsop; above all he delighted in the household humour and homely pathos of Wilkie. And if a higher tone of imagination pleased him, he could gratify it without difficulty among his favourite masters. He possessed some specimens of Etty worthy of Venice when it was alive; he could muse amid the twilight ruins of ancient cities raised by the magic pencil of Danby, or accompany a

group of fair Neapolitans to a festival by the genial aid of Uwins.

Opposite Coningsby was a portrait, which had greatly attracted his attention during the whole dinner. It represented a woman extremely young and of a rare beauty. The costume was of that classical character prevalent in this country before the general peace; a blue ribband bound together as a fillet her clustering chestnut curls. The face was looking out of the canvass, and Coningsby never raised his eyes without catching its glance of blended vivacity and tenderness.

There are moments when our sensibility is affected by circumstances of a very trivial character. It seems a fantastic emotion, but the gaze of this picture disturbed the serenity of Coningsby. He endeavoured sometimes to avoid looking at it, but it irresistibly attracted him. More than once during the dinner he longed to inquire whom it represented; but it is a delicate subject to ask questions about portraits, and he refrained. Still when he was rising to leave the room, the impulse was irresistible. He said to Mr. Millbank, "By whom is that portrait, sir?'

The countenance of Millbank became disturbed; it was not an expression of tender reminiscence that fell upon his features. On the contrary, the expression was agitated, almost angry.

"Oh! that is by a country artist," he said, "of whom you never heard," and moved away.

They found Miss Millbank in the drawing-room. She was sitting at a round table covered with working materials, apparently dressing a doll.

"Nay," thought Coningsby, "she must be too old for that!"

He addressed her and seated himself by her side. There were several dolls on the table, but he discovered, on examination, that they were pincushions; and elicited with some difficulty, that they were making for a fancy fair about to be held in aid of that excellent Institution, the Manchester Athenæum. Then the father came up and said:

"My child, let us have some tea," and she rose, and seated herself at the tea-table. Coningsby also quitted his seat, and surveyed the apartment.

There were several musical instruments; among others he observed a guitar; not such an instrument as one buys in a music-shop, but such an one as tinkles at Seville; a genuine Spanish guitar. Coningsby repaired to the tea-table.

"I am glad that you are fond of music, Miss Millbank."

A blush and a bow.

"I hope after tea you will be so kind as to touch the guitar."

Signals of great distress.

"Were you ever at Birmingham?"

"Yes!" a sigh.

"What a splendid music hall! They should build one at Manchester."

"They ought," in a whisper.

The tea-tray was removed; Coningsby was conversing with Mr. Millbank, who was asking him questions about his son; what he thought of Oxford; what he thought of Oriel; should himself have preferred Cambridge; but had consulted a friend, an Oriel man, who had a great opinion of Oriel; and Oswald's name had

been entered some years back. He rather regretted it now; but the thing was done. Coningsby, remembering the promise of the guitar, turned round to claim its fulfilment, but the singer had made her escape. Time elapsed, and no Miss Millbank re-appeared. Coningsby looked at his watch; he had to go three miles to the train, which started, as his friend of the previous night would phrase it, at 9-45.

"I should be happy if you remained with us," said Mr. Millbank; "but as you say it is out of your power, in this age of punctual travelling, a host is bound to speed the parting guest. The carriage is ready for you."

"Farewell then, sir. You must make my adieux to Miss Millbank, and accept my thanks for your great kindness."

"Farewell, Mr. Coningsby," said his host, taking his hand, which he retained for a moment as if he would say more. Then leaving it, he repeated with a somewhat wandering air, and in a voice of emotion, "Farewell—farewell, Mr. Coningsby."

CHAPTER V.

TOWARDS the end of the session of 1836, the hopes of the Conservative party were again in the ascendant. The Tadpoles and the Tapers had infused such enthusiasm into all the country attorneys, who, in their turn, had so bedevilled the registration, that it was whispered in the utmost confidence, but as a flagrant truth, that Re-action was at length "a great fact." All that was required was the opportunity; but as the existing Parliament was not two years old, and the government had an excellent working majority, it seemed that the occasion could scarcely be furnished. Under these circumstances, the back-stairs politicians, not content with having by their premature movements

already seriously damaged the career of their leader, to whom in public they pretended to be devoted, began weaving again their old intrigues about the court, and not without effect.

It was said that the royal ear lent itself with no marked repugnance to suggestions, which might rid the Sovereign of ministers, who, after all, were the ministers not of his choice, but of his necessity. But William IV. after two failures in a similar attempt, after his respective embarrassing interviews with Lord Grey and Lord Melbourne, on their return to office in 1832 and 1835, was resolved never to make another move unless it were a checkmate. The King therefore listened and smiled, and loved to talk to his favourites of his private feelings and secret hopes; the first outraged, the second cherished; and a little of these revelations of royalty was distilled to great personages who, in their turn spoke hypothetically to their hangers on of royal dispositions and possible contingencies, while the hangers-on and go-betweens, in their turn, looked more than they expressed; took county members by the button

into a corner, and advised, as friends, the representatives of boroughs to look sharply after the next registration.

Lord Monmouth, who was never greater than in adversity, and whose favourite excitement was to aim at the impossible, had never been more resolved on a Dukedom, than when the Reform Act deprived him of the twelve votes, which he had accumulated to attain that object. While all his companions in discomfiture were bewailing their irretrievable overthrow, Lord Monmouth became almost a convert to the measure, which had furnished his devising and daring mind, palled with prosperity, and satiated with a life of success, with an object, and the stimulating enjoyment of a difficulty.

He had early resolved to appropriate to himself a division of the county in which his chief seat was situate; but what most interested him, because it was most difficult, was the acquisition of one of the new boroughs that was in his vicinity, and in which he possessed considerable property. The borough however was a manufacturing town, and returning only one member,

it had hitherto sent up to Westminster a radical shopkeeper, one Mr. Jawster Sharp, who had taken what is called "a leading part" in the town on every "crisis" that had occurred since 1830; one of those zealous patriots who had got up penny subscriptions for gold cups to Lord Grey; cries for the bill, the whole bill, and nothing but the bill; and public dinners where the victual was devoured before grace was said; a worthy who makes speeches, passes resolutions, votes addresses, goes up with deputations, has at all times the necessary quantity of confidence in the necessary individual; confidence in Lord Grey; confidence in Lord Durham; confidence in Lord Melbourne; and can also, if necessary, give three cheers for the King or three groans for the Queen.

But the days of the genus Jawster Sharp were over in this borough as well as in many others. He had contrived in his lustre of agitation to feather his nest pretty successfully; by which he had lost public confidence and gained his private end. Three hungry Jawster Sharps, his hopeful sons, had all become commissioners

of one thing or another; temporary appointments with interminable duties; a low-church son-in-law found himself comfortably seated in a chancellor's living; and several cousins and nephews were busy in the Excise. But Jawster Sharp himself was as pure as Cato. He had always said he would never touch the public money, and he had kept his word. It was an understood thing that Jawster Sharp was never to show his face again on the hustings of Darlford; the Liberal party was determined to be represented in future by a man of station, substance, character, a true Reformer, but one who wanted nothing for himself, and therefore might if needful get something for them. They were looking out for such a man, but were in no hurry. The seat was looked upon as a good thing; a contest certainly, every place is contested now, but as certainly a large majority. Notwithstanding all this confidence however, Re-action or Registration, or some other mystification had produced effects even in this creature of the Reform Bill, the good Borough of Darlford. The borough that out of gratitude

to Lord Grey returned a jobbing shopkeeper twice to Parliament as its representative without a contest, had now a Conservative Association, with a banker for its chairman, and a brewer for its vice-president, and four sharp lawyers knibbing their pens, noting their memorandum books, and assuring their neighbours with a consoling and complacent air, that "Property must tell in the long run." Whispers also were about that when the proper time arrived, a Conservative candidate would certainly have the honour of addressing the electors. No name mentioned, but it was not concealed that he was to be of no ordinary calibre; a tried man, a distinguished individual, who had already fought the battle of the constitution, and served his country in eminent posts; honoured by the nation, favored by his sovereign. These important and encouraging intimations were ably diffused in the columns of the Conservative journal, and in a style which from its high tone evidently indicated no ordinary source and no common pen. Indeed there appeared occasionally in this paper articles written with such unusual

vigour, that the proprietors of the Liberal journal almost felt the necessity of getting some eminent hand down from town to compete with them. It was impossible that they could emanate from the rival Editor. They knew well the length of their brother's tether. Had they been more versant in the periodical literature of the day, they might in this "slashing" style have caught perhaps a glimpse of the future candidate for their borough, the Right Honourable Nicholas Rigby.

Lord Monmouth, though he had been absent from England since 1832, had obtained from his vigilant correspondent a current knowledge of all that had occurred in the interval. All the hopes, fears, plans, prospects, manœuvres, and machinations; their rise and fall; how some had bloomed, others were blighted; not a shade of re-action that was not represented to him; not the possibility of an adhesion that was not duly reported; he could calculate at Naples at any time within ten, the result of a dissolution. The season of the year had prevented him crossing the Alps in 1834, and after the

general election he was too shrewd a practiser in the political world to be deceived as to the ultimate result. Lord Eskdale, in whose judgment he had more confidence than in that of any individual, had told him from the first that the pear was not ripe; Rigby, who always hedged against his interest by the fulfilment of his prophecy of irremediable discomfiture, was never very sanguine. Indeed the whole affair was always considered premature by the good judges; and a long time elapsed before Tadpole and Taper recovered their secret influence, or re-assumed their ostentatious loquacity or their silent insolence.

The pear however now was ripe. Even Lord Eskdale wrote that after the forthcoming registration a bet was safe, and Lord Monmouth had the satisfaction of drawing the Whig Minister at Naples into a cool thousand on the event. Soon after this he returned to England, and determined to pay a visit to Coningsby Castle, feast the county, patronise the borough, diffuse that confidence in the party which his presence never failed to do; so great and so just was

the reliance in his unerring powers of calculation, and his intrepid pluck. Notwithstanding Schedule A, the prestige of his power had not sensibly diminished, for his essential resources were vast, and his intellect always made the most of his influence.

True however to his organization Lord Monmouth, even to save his party and gain his dukedom, must not be bored. He therefore filled his castle with the most agreeable people from London, and even secured for their diversion a little troop of French comedians. Thus supported he received his neighbours with all the splendour befitting his immense wealth and great position, and with one charm which even immense wealth and great position cannot command, the most perfect manner in the world. Indeed Lord Monmouth was one of the most finished gentlemen that ever lived, and as he was extremely good-natured, and for a selfish man even good-humoured, there was rarely a cloud of caprice or ill-temper to prevent his fine manners having their fair play. The country neighbours were all fascinated; they were received

with so much dignity and dismissed with so much grace. Nobody would believe a word of the stories against him. Had he lived all his life at Coningsby, fulfilled every duty of a great English nobleman, benefited the county, loaded the inhabitants with favours, he would not have been half so popular as he found himself within a fortnight of his arrival with the worst county reputation conceivable, and every little squire vowing that he would not even leave his name at the castle to show his respect.

Lord Monmouth whose contempt for mankind was absolute; not a fluctuating sentiment, not a mournful conviction ebbing and flowing with circumstances, but a fixed, profound, unalterable instinct; who never loved any one, and never hated any one except his own children; was diverted by his popularity, but he was also gratified by it. At this moment it was a great element of power; he was proud that with a vicious character, after having treated these people with unprecedented neglect and contumely, he should have won back their golden opinions in a moment by the magic of

manner and the splendour of wealth. His experience proved the soundness of his philosophy.

Lord Monmouth worshipped gold, though, if necessary, he could squander it like a caliph. He had even a respect for very rich men; it was his only weakness, the only exception to his general scorn for his species. Wit, power, particular friendships, general popularity, public opinion, beauty, genius, virtue, all these are to be purchased; but it does not follow that you can buy a rich man: you may not be able or willing to spare enough. A person or a thing that you perhaps could not buy, became invested in the eyes of Lord Monmonth with a kind of halo amounting almost to sanctity.

As the prey rose to the bait, Lord Monmouth resolved they should be gorged. His banquets were doubled; a ball was announced; a public day fixed; not only the county but the principal inhabitants of the neighbouring borough were encouraged to attend; Lord Monmouth wished it, if possible, to be without distinction of party. He had come to reside among his old friends, to live and die where he was born. The Chairman

of the Conservative Association and the Vice-President exchanged glances, which would have become Tadpole and Taper; the four attorneys knibbed their pens with increased energy, and vowed that nothing could withstand the influence of the aristocracy "in the long run." All went and dined at the castle; all returned home overpowered by the condescension of the host, the beauty of the ladies, several real Princesses, the splendour of his liveries, the variety of his viands, and the flavour of his wines. It was agreed that at future meetings of the Conservative Association, they should always give "Lord Monmouth and the House of Lords!"—superseding the Duke of Wellington, who was to figure in an after toast with the Battle of Waterloo.

It was not without emotion that Coningsby beheld for the first time the castle that bore his name. It was visible for several miles before he even entered the park, so proud and prominent was its position, on the richly wooded steep of a considerable eminence. It was a castellated building, immense and magnificent, in a very faulty and incongruous style of architecture indeed,

but compensating in some degree for these deficiencies of external taste and beauty by the splendour and accommodation of its interior, and which a Gothic castle raised according to the strict rules of art could scarcely have afforded. The declining sun threw over the pile a rich colour as Coningsby approached it, and lit up with fleeting and fanciful tints the delicate foliage, of the rare shrubs and tall thin trees that clothed the acclivity on which it stood. Our young friend felt a little embarrassed when, without a a servant and in a hack chaise, he drew up to the grand portal, and a crowd of retainers came forth to receive him. A superior servant inquired his name with a stately composure, that disdained to be supercilious. It was not without some degree of pride and satisfaction that the guest replied, "Mr. Coningsby." The instantaneous effect was magical. It seemed to Coningsby that he was borne on the shoulders of the people to his apartment; each tried to carry some part of his luggage; and he only hoped his welcome from their superiors might be as hearty.

CHAPTER VI.

It appeared to Coningsby in his way to his room, that the castle was in a state of great excitement; everywhere bustle, preparation, moving to and fro, ascending and descending of stairs, servants in every corner; orders boundlessly given, rapidly obeyed; many desires, equal gratification. All this made him rather nervous. It was quite unlike Beaumanoir. That also was a palace, but it was a home. This, though it should be one to him, seemed to have nothing of that character. Of all mysteries the social mysteries are the most appalling. Going to an assembly for the first time is more alarming than the first battle. Coningsby had never before been in a great house full of company. It

seemed an overwhelming affair. The sight of the servants bewildered him; how then was he to encounter their masters?

That however he must do in a moment. A groom of the chambers indicates the way to him, as he proceeds with a hesitating yet hurried step through several ante-chambers and drawing-rooms; then doors are suddenly thrown open, and he is ushered into the largest and most sumptuous saloon that he had ever entered. It was full of ladies and gentlemen. Coningsby for the first time in his life was at a great party. His immediate emotion was to sink into the earth, but perceiving that no one even noticed him, and that not an eye had been attracted to his entrance, he regained his breath and in some degree his composure, and standing aside, endeavoured to make himself as well as he could master of the land.

Not a human being that he had ever seen before! The circumstance of not being noticed which a few minutes since he had felt as a relief, became now a cause of annoyance. It seemed that he was the only person standing alone

whom no one was addressing. He felt renewed and aggravated embarrassment, and fancied, perhaps was conscious, that he was blushing. At length his ear caught the voice of Mr. Rigby. The speaker was not visible; he was at a distance surrounded by a wondering group whom he was severally and collectively contradicting, but Coningsby could not mistake those harsh, arrogant tones. He was not sorry indeed that Mr. Rigby did not observe him. Coningsby never loved him particularly, which was rather ungrateful, for he was a person who had been kind, and on the whole, serviceable to him, but Coningsby writhed, and especially as he grew older, under Mr. Rigby's patronising air and paternal tone. Even in old days though attentive, Coningsby had never found him affectionatc. Mr. Rigby would tell him what to do and see, but never asked him what he wished to do and see. It seemed to Coningsby that it was always contrived that he should appear the "protégé" or poor relation, of a dependent of his family. These feelings, which the thought of Mr. Rigby had revived, caused

our young friend, by an inevitable association of ideas, to remember that, unknown and unnoticed as he might be, he was the only Coningsby in that proud Castle, except the Lord of the castle himself; and he began to be rather ashamed of permitting a sense of his inexperience in the mere forms and fashions of society so to oppress him, and deprive him as it were of the spirit and carriage which became alike his character and his position. Emboldened and greatly restored to himself, Coningsby advanced into the body of the saloon.

On his legs, wearing his blue riband and bending his head frequently to a lady who was seated on a sofa and continually addressed him, Coningsby recognised his grandfather. Lord Monmouth was somewhat balder than four years ago, when he had come down to Montem, and a little more portly perhaps; but otherwise unchanged. Lord Monmouth never condescended to the artifices of the toilet, and indeed notwithstanding his life of excess had little need of them. Nature had done much for him, and the slow progress of decay was carried off by his

consummate bearing. He looked indeed the chieftain of a house of whom a cadet might be proud.

For Coningsby, not only the chief of his house, but his host too. In either capacity he ought to address Lord Monmouth. To sit down to dinner without having previously paid his respects to his grandfather, to whom he was so much indebted, and whom he had not seen for so many years, struck him not only as uncourtly, but as unkind and ungrateful, and indeed in the highest degree absurd. But how was he to do it? Lord Monmouth seemed very deeply engaged, and apparently with some very great lady. And if Coningsby advanced and bowed, in all probability he would only get a bow in return. He remembered the bow of his first interview. It had made a lasting impression on his mind. For it was more than likely Lord Monmouth would not recognise him. Four years had not very sensibly altered Lord Monmouth, but four years had changed Harry Coningsby from a schoolboy into a man. Then how was he to make himself known to his

grandfather? To announce himself as Coningsby, as his Lordship's grandson, seemed somewhat ridiculous. To address his grandfather as Lord Monmouth would serve no purpose; to style Lord Monmouth "grandfather," would make every one laugh and seemed stiff and unnatural. What was he to do? To fall into an attitude, and exclaim, "Behold your grandchild!" or "Have you forgot your Harry?"

Even to catch Lord Monmouth's glance was not a very easy affair; he was much engaged on one side by the great lady; on the other were several gentlemen who occasionally joined in the conversation. But something must be done.

There ran through Coningsby's character, as we have before mentioned, a vein of simplicity which was not its least charm. It resulted no doubt in a great degree from the earnestness of his nature. There never was a boy so totally devoid of affectation, which was remarkable, for he had a brilliant imagination, a quality that from its fantasies and the vague and indefinite desires it engenders, generally makes those whose characters are not formed, very affected. The

Duchess who was a fine judge of character, and who greatly regarded Coningsby, often mentioned this trait as one which, combined with his great abilities and acquirements so unusual at his age, rendered him very interesting. In the present instance it happened, that while Coningsby was watching his grandfather, he observed a gentleman advance, make his bow, say and receive a few words, and retire. This little incident however made a momentary diversion in the immediate circle of Lord Monmouth, and before they could all resume their former talk and fall into their previous positions, an impulse sent forth Coningsby, who walked up to Lord Monmouth, and standing before him, said:

"How do you do, grandpapa?"

Lord Monmouth beheld his grandson. His comprehensive and penetrating glance took in every point with a flash. There stood before him one of the handsomest youths he had ever seen, with a mien as graceful as his countenance was captivating; and his whole air breathing that freshness and ingenuousness which none so much appreciates as the used man of the

world. And this was his child; the only one of his blood to whom he had been kind. It would be exaggeration to say that Lord Monmouth's heart was touched; but his good-nature effervesced, and his fine taste was deeply gratified. He perceived in an instant such a relation might be a valuable adherent; an irresistible candidate for future elections; a brilliant tool to work out the Dukedom. All these impressions and ideas, and many more, passed through the quick brain of Lord Monmouth ere the sound of Coningsby's words had seemed to cease, and long before the surrounding guests had recovered from the surprise which they had occasioned them; and which did not diminish when Lord Monmouth advancing placed his arms round Coningsby with a dignity of affection that would have become Louis XIV, and then in the high manner of the old Court kissed him on each cheek.

"Welcome to your home," said Lord Monmouth. "You have grown a great deal."

Then Lord Monmouth led the agitated Coningsby to the great Lady who was a Princess

and an Ambassadress, and then placing his arm gracefully in that of his grandson he led him across the room, and presented him in due form to some royal blood that was his guest in the shape of a Russian Archduke. His Imperial Highness received our hero as graciously as the grandson of Lord Monmouth might expect; but no greeting can be imagined warmer than the one he received from the lady with whom the Archduke was conversing. She was a dame whose beauty was mature, but still radiant. Her figure was superb; her dark hair crowned with a tiara of curious workmanship. Her rounded arm was covered with costly bracelets, but not a jewel on her finely-formed bust, and the least possible rouge on her still oval cheek. Madame Colonna retained her charms.

The party though so considerable principally consisted of the guests at the Castle. The suite of the Archduke included several Counts and Generals; then there was the Russian Ambassador and his lady; and a Russian Prince and Princess, their relations. The Prince and

Princess Colonna and the Princess Lucretia were also paying a visit to the Marquess; and the frequency of these visits made some strait-laced magnificoes mysteriously declare it was impossible to go to Coningsby; but as they were not asked it did not much signify. The Marquess knew a great many very agreeable people of the highest ton, who took a more liberal view of human conduct, and always made it a rule to presume the best motives instead of imputing the worst. There was Lady St. Julians for example, whose position was of the highest; no one more sought; she made it a rule to go everywhere and visit everybody, provided they had power, wealth, and fashion. She knew no crime except a woman not living with her husband; that was past pardon. As long as his presence sanctioned her conduct, however shameless, it did not signify; but if the husband were a brute, neglected his wife first, and then deserted her; then, if a breath but sullies her name she must be crushed; unless indeed her own family were very powerful, which makes a difference, and

sometimes softens immorality into indiscretion.

Lord and Lady Gaverstock were also there, who never said an unkind thing of anybody; her ladyship was pure as snow; but her mother having been divorced, she ever fancied she was paying a kind of homage to her parent by visiting those who might be some day in the same predicament. There were other lords and ladies of high degree; and some who, though neither lords and ladies, were charming people, which Lord Monmouth chiefly cared about; troops of fine gentlemen who came and went; and some who were neither fine, nor gentlemen, but who were very amusing or very obliging as circumstances required, and made life easy and pleasant to others and themselves.

A new scene this for Coningsby, who watched with interest all that passed before him. The dinner was announced as served; an affectionate arm guides him at a moment of some perplexity.

"When did you arrive, Harry? We will sit together. How is the Duchess?" inquired Mr.

Rigby, who spoke as if he had seen Coningsby for the first time; but who indeed had, with that eye which nothing could escape, observed his reception by his grandfather, marked it well, and inwardly digested it.

CHAPTER VII.

THERE was to be a first appearance on the stage of Lord Monmouth's theatre to-night, the expectation of which created considerable interest in the party, and was one of the principal subjects of conversation at dinner. Villebecque, the manager of the troop, had married the actress Stella, once celebrated for her genius and her beauty; a woman who had none of the vices of her craft, for, though she was a fallen angel, there were what her countrymen style extenuating circumstances in her declension. With the whole world at her feet, she had remained unsullied. Wealth and its enjoyments could not

tempt her, although she was unable to refuse her heart to one whom she deemed worthy of possessing it. She found her fate in an Englishman, who was the father of her only child, a daughter. She thought she had met in him a hero, a demi-god, a being of deep passion and original and creative mind; but he was only a voluptuary, full of violence instead of feeling, and eccentric because he had great means with which he could gratify extravagant whims. Stella found she had made the great and irretrievable mistake. She had exchanged devotion for a passionate and evanescent fancy, prompted at first by vanity, and daily dissipating under the influence of custom and new objects. Though not stainless in conduct, Stella was pure in spirit. She required that devotion which she had yielded; and she separated herself from the being to whom she had made the most precious sacrifice. He offered her the consoling compensation of a settlement which she refused; and she returned with a broken spirit to that profession of which she was still the ornament and the pride.

The animating principle of her career was her daughter, whom she educated with a solicitude which the most virtuous mother could not surpass. To preserve her from the stage, and to secure for her an independence, were the objects of the mother's life; but nature whispered to her, that the days of that life were already numbered. The exertions of her profession had alarmingly developed an inherent tendency to pulmonary disease. Anxious that her child should not be left without some protector, Stella yielded to the repeated solicitations of one who from the first had been her silent admirer, and she married Villebecque, a clever actor, and an enterprising man who meant to be something more. Their union was not of long duration, though it was happy on the side of Villebecque, and serene on that of his wife. Stella was recalled from this world, where she had known much triumph and more suffering; and where she had exercised many virtues, which elsewhere, though not here, may perhaps be accepted as some palliation of one great error.

Villebecque acted becomingly to the young charge which Stella had bequeathed to him. He was himself, as we have intimated, a man of enterprise, a restless spirit, not content to move for ever in the sphere in which he was born. Vicissitudes are the lot of such aspirants. Villebecque became manager of a small theatre, and made money. If Villebecque, without a "sous," had been a schemer, Villebecque with a small capital was the very Chevalier Law of theatrical managers. He took a larger theatre and even that succeeded. Soon he was recognised as the lessee of more than one, and still he prospered. Villebecque began to dabble in Opera houses. He enthroned himself at Paris; his envoys were heard of at Milan and Naples, at Berlin and St. Petersburg. His controversies with the "Conservatoire" at Paris, ranked among state papers. Villebecque rolled in chariots and drove cabs; Villebecque gave refined suppers to great nobles, who were honoured by the invitation; Villebecque wore a red riband in the button-hole of his frock, and more than one cross in his gala dress.

All this time the daughter of Stella increased in years and stature, and we must add in goodness: a mild soft-hearted girl, as yet with no decided character, but one who loved calmness and seemed little fitted for the circle in which she found herself. In that circle however she ever experienced kindness and consideration. No enterprise however hazardous, no management however complicated, no schemes however vast, ever for a moment induced Villebecque to forget "La Petite." If only for one breathless instant, hardly a day elapsed but he saw her; she was his companion in all his rapid movements, and he studied every comfort and convenience that could relieve her delicate frame in some degree from the inconvenience and exhaustion of travel. He was proud to surround her with luxury and refinement; to supply her with the most celebrated masters; to gratify every wish that she could express.

But all this time Villebecque was dancing on a volcano. The catastrophe which inevitably occurs in the career of all great speculators, and especially theatrical ones, arrived to him.

Flushed with his prosperity, and confident in his constant success, nothing would satisfy him but universal empire. He had established his despotism at Paris, his dynasties at Naples and at Milan; but the North was not to him, and he was determined to appropriate it. Berlin fell before a successful campaign, though a costly one; but St. Petersburg and London still remained. Resolute and reckless nothing deterred Villebecque. One season all the Opera houses in Europe obeyed his nod, and at the end of it he was ruined. The crash was utter, universal, overwhelming; and under ordinary circumstances a French bed and a brasier of charcoal alone remained for Villebecque, who was equal to the occasion. But the thought of "La Petite" and the remembrance of his promise to Stella deterred him from the deed. He reviewed his position in a spirit becoming a practical philosopher. Was he worse off than before he commenced his career? Yes, because he was older;—though to be sure he had his compensating reminiscences. But was he too old to do anything? At forty-five the game was not altogether up; and in a

large theatre, not too much lighted, and with the artifices of a dramatic toilet, he might still be able successfully to re-assume those characters of coxcombs and "muscadins," in which he was once so celebrated. Luxury had perhaps a little too much enlarged his waist, but diet and rehearsals would set all right.

Villebecque in their adversity broke to "La Petite" that the time had unfortunately arrived when it would be wise for her to consider the most effectual means for turning her talents and accomplishments to account. He himself suggested the stage, to which otherwise there were doubtless objections, because her occupation in any other pursuit would necessarily separate them; but he impartially placed before her the relative advantages and disadvantages of every course which seemed to lay open to them and left the preferable one to her own decision. "La Petite," who had wept very much over Villebecque's misfortunes and often assured him that she cared for them only for his sake, decided for the stage, solely because it would secure their not being parted; and yet, as she often assured

him, she feared she had no predisposition for the career.

Villebecque had now not only to fill his own parts at the theatre at which he had obtained an engagement, but he had also to be the instructor of his ward. It was a life of toil; an addition of labour and effort that need scarcely have been made to the exciting exertion of performance, and the dull exercise of rehearsal; but he bore it all without a murmur; with a self-command and a gentle perseverance which the finest temper in the world could hardly account for; certainly not when we remember its possessor who had to make all these exertions and endure all this wearisome toil, had just experienced the most shattering vicissitudes of fortune, and been hurled from the possession of absolute power and illimitable self-gratification.

Lord Eskdale, who was always doing kind things to actors and actresses, had a great regard for Villebecque with whom he had often supped. He had often been kind too to "La Petite." Lord Eskdale had a plan for putting Villebecque as he termed it, "on his legs again." It was to

establish him with a French company in London at some pretty theatre; Lord Eskdale to take a private box and to make all his friends do the same. Villebecque, who was as sanguine as he was good tempered, was ravished by this friendly scheme. He immediately believed that he should recover his great fortunes as rapidly as he had lost them. He foresaw in "La Petite" a genius as distinguished as that of her mother, although as yet not developed, and he was boundless in his expressions of gratitude to his patron. And indeed of all friends, a friend in need is the most delightful. Lord Eskdale had the talent of being a friend in need. Perhaps it was because he knew so many worthless persons. But it often appens that worthless persons are merely people who are worth nothing.

Lord Monmouth having written to Mr. Rigby of his intention to reside for some months at Coningsby, and having mentioned that he wished a troop of French comedians to be engaged for the summer, Mr. Rigby had immediately consulted Lord Eskdale on the subject, as the best current authority. Thinking this a good oppor-

tunity of giving a turn to poor Villebecque, and that it might serve as a capital introduction to their scheme of the London company, Lord Eskdale obtained for him the engagement.

Villebecque and his little troop had now been a month at Coningsby, and had hitherto performed three times a week. Lord Monmouth was content; his guests much gratified; the company on the whole much approved of. It was indeed considering its limited numbers, a capital company. There was a young lady who played the old woman's parts—nothing could be more garrulous and venerable; and a lady of maturer years who performed the heroines, gay and graceful as May. Villebecque himself was a celebrity in characters of airy insolence and careless frolic. Their old man indeed was rather hard, but handy; could take anything either in the high serious or the low droll. Their sentimental lover was rather too much bewigged, and spoke too much to the audience, a fault rare with the French; but this hero had a vague idea that he was ultimately destined to run off with a Princess.

In this wise, affairs had gone on for a month; very well, but not too well. The enterprising genius of Villebecque, once more a manager, prompted him to action. He felt an itching desire to announce a novelty. He fancied Lord Monmouth had yawned once or twice when the heroine came on. Villebecque wanted to make a "coup." It was clear that "La Petite' must sooner or later begin. Could she find a more favourable audience, or a more fitting occasion than were now offered? True it was she had a great repugnance to come out; but it certainly seemed more to her advantage that she should make her first appearance at a private theatre than at a public one; supported by all the encouraging patronage of Coningsby Castle, than subjected to all the cynical criticism of the stalls of St. James's.

These views and various considerations were urged and represented by Villebecque to "La Petite," with all the practised powers of plausibility of which so much experience as a manager had made him master. "La Petite" looked infinitely distressed, but yielded as she

ever did. And the night of Coningsby's arrival at the castle was to witness in its private theatre the first appearance of MADEMOISELLE FLORA.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE guests re-assembled in the great saloon before they repaired to the theatre. A lady on the arm of the Russian Prince bestowed on Coningsby a haughty, but not ungracious, bow; which he returned, unconscious of the person to whom he bent. She was however a very striking person: not beautiful; her face indeed at the first glance was almost repulsive, yet it ever attracted a second gaze. A remarkable pallor distinguished her; her features had neither regularity nor expression; neither were her eyes fine; but her brow impressed you with an idea of power of no ordinary character or capacity. Her figure was as fine and commanding as her

face was void of charm. Juno, in the full bloom of her immortality, could have presented nothing more majestic. Coningsby watched her as she swept along like a resistless Fate.

Servants now went round and presented to each of the guests a billet of the performance. It announced in striking characters the "début" of Mademoiselle Flora. A principal servant bearing branch lights, came forward and bowed to the Marquess. Lord Monmouth went immediately to the Archduke, and notified to his Imperial Highness that the comedy was ready. The Archduke offered his arm to the Ambassadress; the rest were following; Coningsby was called. Madame Colonna wished him to be her beau.

It was a very pretty theatre; had been rapidly rubbed up, and renovated here and there; the painting just touched; a little gilding on a cornice. There were no boxes, but the ground floor which gradually ascended was carpeted, and covered with arm chairs, and the back of the theatre with a new and rich curtain of green velvet.

They are all seated; a great artist performs on the violin, accompanied by another great artist on the piano. The lights rise; somebody evidently crosses the stage behind the curtain. They are disposing the scene. In a moment the curtain will rise also.

"Have you seen Lucretia?" said the Princess to Coningsby. "She is so anxious to resume her acquaintance with you."

But before he could answer the bell rang, and the curtain rose.

The old man, who had a droll part to-night, came forward, and maintained a conversation with his housekeeper; not bad. The young woman who played the grave matron, performed with great finish. She was a favourite and was ever applauded. The second scene came; a saloon tastefully furnished; a table with flowers, arranged with grace; birds in cages, a lap-dog on a cushion; some books. The audience were pleased; especially the ladies: they like to recognise signs of "bon-ton" in the details of the scene. A rather awful pause; and Mademoiselle Flora enters. She was greeted with even ve-

hement approbation. Her agitation is extreme; she curtseys, and bows her head, as if to hide her face. The face was pleasing, and pretty enough; soft and engaging. Her figure slight and graceful. Nothing could be more perfect than her costume; purely white, but the fashion consummate; a single rose her only ornament All admitted that her hair was arranged to admiration.

At length she spoke; her voice trembled, but she had a good elocution though her organ wanted force. The gentlemen looked at each other, and nodded approbation. There was something so unobstrusive in her mien, that she instantly became a favourite with the ladies. The scene was not long, but it was triumphant.

Flora did not appear in the next scene. In the fourth and final one of the act, she had to make a grand display. It was a love scene; and rather of an impassioned character; Villebecque was her suitor. He entered first on the stage. Never had he looked so well, or performed with more spirit. You would not have given him five-and-twenty years; he seemed redolent

of youth. His dress too was admirable. He had studied the most distinguished of his audience for the occasion, and had outdone them all. The fact is, he had been assisted a little by a great connoisseur, a celebrated French nobleman, Count D—y, who had been one of the guests. The thing was perfect, and Lord Monmouth took a pinch of snuff, and tapped approbation on the top of his box.

Flora now re-appeared, received with renewed approbation. It did not seem however that in the interval she had gained courage; she looked agitated. She spoke, she proceeded with her part; it became impassioned. She had to speak of her feelings; to tell the secrets of her heart; to confess that she loved another: her emotion was exquisitely performed, the mournful tenderness of her tones thrilling. There was throughout the audience a dead silence; all were absorbed in their admiration of the unrivalled artist; all felt a new genius had visited the stage;—but while they were fascinated by the actress, the woman was in torture. The emotion was the disturbance of her own soul; the mournful ten-

derness of her tones thrilled from the heart: suddenly she clasped her hands with all the exhaustion of woe; an expression of agony flitted over her countenance; and she burst into tears. Villebecque rushed forward, and carried rather than led her from the stage; the audience looking at each other, some of them suspecting that this movement was a part of the scene.

"She has talent," said Lord Monmouth to the Russian ambassadress, "but wants practice. Villebecque should send her for a time to the provinces."

At length M. Villebecque came forward to express his deep regret that the sudden and severe indisposition of Mlle. Flora rendered it impossible for the company to proceed with the piece; but that the curtain would descend to rise again for the second and last piece announced.

All this accordingly took place. The experienced performer who acted the heroines, now came forward and disported most jocundly. The failure of Flora had given fresh animation to her perpetual liveliness. She seemed the very soul of elegant frolic. In the last scene she

figured in male attire; and in air, fashion, and youth, beat Villebecque out of the field. She looked younger than Coningsby when he went up to his grand-papa.

The comedy was over, the curtain fell, the audience much amused chattered brilliant criticism, and quitted the theatre to repair to the saloon where they were to be diverted to-night with Russian dances. Nobody thought of the unhappy Flora; not a single message to console her in her grief, to compliment her on what she had done, to encourage her future. And yet it was a season for a word of kindness; so at least thought one of the audience, as he lingered behind the hurrying crowd absorbed in their coming amusements.

Coningsby had sat very near the stage; he had observed with great advantage and attention the countenance and movements of Flora from the beginning. He was fully persuaded that her woe was genuine and profound. He had felt his eyes moist when she had wept. He recoiled from the cruelty and the callousness that, without the slightest symptom of sympathy, could

leave a young girl who had been labouring for their amusement and who was suffering for her trial.

He got on the stage, ran behind the scenes, and asked for Mlle. Flora. They pointed to a door; he requested permission to enter. Flora was sitting at a table with her face resting on her hands. Villebecque was there, resting on the edge of the tall fender, and still in the dress in which he had performed in the last piece.

"I took the liberty," said Coningsby, "of inquiring after Mlle. Flora;" and then advancing to her, who had raised her head, he added: "I am sure my grandfather must feel much indebted to you, Mademoiselle, for making such exertions when you were suffering under so much indisposition."

"This is very amiable of you, sir," said the young lady, looking at him with earnestness.

"Mademoiselle has too much sensibility," said Villebecque, making an observation by way of diversion.

"And yet that must be the soul of fine acting," said Coningsby; "I look forward—all

look forward—with great interest to the next occasion on which you will favour us."

"Never!" said La Petite in a plaintive tone; "oh, I hope, never!"

"Mademoiselle is not aware at this moment," said Coningsby, "how much her talent is appreciated. I assure you, sir," he added, turning to Villebecque, "I heard but one opinion, but one expression of gratification at her feeling and her fine taste."

"The talent is hereditary," said Villebecque.

"Indeed you have reason to say so," said Coningsby.

"Pardon; I was not thinking of myself. My child reminded me so much of another this evening. But that is nothing. I am glad you are here, sir, to re-assure Mademoiselle."

"I came only to congratulate her, and to lament, for our sakes as well as her own, her indisposition."

"It is not indisposition," said La Petite in a tone, with her eyes fixed on the table.

"Mademoiselle cannot overcome the nervous-

ness incidental to a first appearance," said Villebecque.

"A last appearance," said La Petite; "yes, it must be the last." She rose gently, she approached Villebecque, she laid her head on his breast, and placed her arms round his neck, "My father, my best father, yes, say it is the last!"

"You are the mistress of your lot, Flora," said Villebecque; "but with such a distinguished talent—"

"No, no, no: no talent. You are wrong, my father. I know myself. I am not of those to whom nature gives talents. I am born only for still life. I have no taste except for privacy. The convent is more suited to me than the stage."

"But you hear what this gentleman says," said Villebecque returning her embrace. "He tells you that his grandfather—my Lord Marquess I believe, sir,—that every one—that—

"Ah, no, no, no!" said Flora, shaking her head. "He comes here because he is generous, because he is a gentleman; and he wished to

soothe the soul that he knew was suffering. Thank him, my father, thank him for me and before me, and promise in his presence that the stage and your daughter have parted for ever."

"Nay, Mademoiselle," said Coningsby advancing and venturing to take her hand, a soft hand, "make no such resolutions to-night. M. Villebecque can have no other thought or object but your happiness: and believe me 'tis not I only, but all, who appreciate, and if they were here, must respect you."

"I prefer respect to admiration," said Flora; "but I fear that respect is not the appanage of such as I am."

"All must respect those who respect themselves," said Coningsby. "Adieu, Mademoiselle; I trust to-morrow to hear that you are yourself." He bowed to Villebecque and retired.

In the mean time, affairs in the drawing-room assumed a very different character to those behind the scenes. Coningsby returned to brilliancy, groups apparently gushing with light-heartedness, universal content, and Russian dances!

"And you too, do you dance the Russian dances, Mr. Coningsby ?" said Madame Colonna.

"I cannot dance at all," said Coningsby, beginning a little to lose his pride in the want of an accomplishment which at Eton he had thought it spirited to despise.

"Ah ! you cannot dance the Russian dances ! Lucretia shall teach you," said the Princess; "nothing will please her so much."

On the present occasion the ladies were not as experienced in the entertainment as the gentlemen; but there was amusement in being instructed. To be disciplined by an Archduke or a Russian Princess was all very well; but what even the good-tempered Lady Gaythorpe could not pardon was, that a certain Mrs Guy Flouncey, whom they were all of them trying to put down, and keep down, on this, as almost on every other occasion, proved herself a more finished performer than even the Russians themselves.

Lord Monmouth had picked up the Guy Flounceys during a Roman winter. They were people of some position in society.

Mr. Guy Flouncey was a man of good estate, a sportsman, proud of his pretty wife. Mrs. Guy Flouncey was even very pretty, dressed in a style of ultra fashion. However, she could sing, dance, act, ride, and talk, and all well; and was mistress of the art of flirtation. She had amused the Marquess abroad, and had taken care to call at Monmouth House, the instant the Morning Post apprised her he had arrived in England; the consequence was an invitation to Coningsby. She came with a wardrobe which, in point of variety, fancy and fashion, never was surpassed. Morning and evening, every day a new dress equally striking; and a riding-habit that was the talk and wonder of the whole neighbourhood. Mrs. Guy Flouncey created far more sensation in the borough when she rode down the High Street, than what the good people called the real Princesses.

At first the fine ladies never noticed her, or only stared at her over their shoulders; every where sounded, in suppressed whispers, the fatal question, "Who is she?" After dinner they formed always into polite groups, from which

Mrs. Guy Flouncey was invariably excluded; and if ever the Princess Colonna, impelled partly by her good nature, and partly from having known her on the continent, did kindly sit by her, Lady St. Julians, or some dame equally benevolent, was sure by an adroit appeal to her Highness on some point which could not be decided without moving, to withdraw her from her pretty and persecuted companion.

It was indeed rather difficult work the first few days for Mrs. Guy Flouncey, especially immediately after dinner. It is not soothing to one's self-love to find oneself sitting alone pretending to look at prints in a fine drawing-room full of fine people who don't speak to you. But Mrs. Guy Flouncey. after having taken Coningsby Castle by storm, was not to be driven out of its drawing-room by the tactics even of a Lady St. Julians. Experience convinced her that all that was required was a little patience. Mrs. Guy had confidence in herself, her quickness, her ever ready accomplishments, and her practised powers of attraction. And she was

right. She was always sure of an ally the moment the gentlemen appeared. The cavalier who had sate next to her at dinner was only too happy to meet her again. More than once too she had caught her noble host, though a whole garrison was ever on the watch to prevent her, and he was greatly amused, and showed that he was greatly amused by her society. Then she suggested plans to him to divert his guests. In a country-house the suggestive mind is inestimable. Some how or other, before a week was past, Mrs. Guy Flouncey seemed the soul of everything, was always surrounded by a cluster of admirers, and with what are called "the best men" ever ready to ride with her, dance with her, act with her, or fall at her feet. The fine ladies found it absolutely necessary to thaw: they began to ask her questions after dinner. Mrs. Guy Flouncey only wanted an opening. She was an adroit flatterer, with a temper imperturbable, and gifted with a ceaseless energy of conferring slight obligations. She lent them patterns for new fashions, in all which mysteries she was very versant; and

what with some gentle glozing and some gay gossip, sugar for their tongues and salt for their tails, she contrived pretty well to catch them all.

CHAPTER IX.

NOTHING could present a greater contrast than the respective interiors of Coningsby and Beaumanoir. That air of habitual habitation, which so pleasingly distinguished the Duke's family seat, was entirely wanting at Coningsby. Everything indeed was vast and splendid; but it seemed rather a gala-house than a dwelling; as if the grand furniture and the grand servants had all come down express from town with the grand company, and were to disappear and to be dispersed at the same time. And truly there were very manifold traces of hasty and temporary arrangement; new carpets and old hangings; old

paint, new gilding; battalions of odd French chairs, squadrons of queer English tables; and large tasteless lamps and tawdry chandeliers, evidently true cockneys, and only taking the air by way of change. There was too throughout the drawing-rooms an absence of all those minor articles of ornamental furniture that are the offering of taste to the home we love. There were no books neither; no flowers; no pet animals; no portfolios of fine drawings by our English artists like the album of the Duchess, full of sketches by Landseer and Stanfield, and their gifted brethren; not a print even, except portfolios of H. B's caricatures. The modes and manners of the house were not rural; there was nothing of the sweet order of a country life. Nobody came down to breakfast; the ladies were scarcely seen until dinner time; they rolled about in carriages together late in the afternoon as if they were in London, or led a sort of factitious boudoir life in their provincial dressing-rooms.

The Marquess sent for Coningsby the morning after his arrival and asked him to breakfast with him in his private rooms. No-

thing could be more kind or more agreeable than his grandfather. He appeared to be very interested in his grandson's progress, was glad to find Coningsby had distinguished himself at Eton, solemnly adjured him not to neglect his French. A classical education, he said, was a very admirable thing, and one which all gentlemen should enjoy; but Coningsby would find some day that there were two educations, one which his position required, and another which was demanded by the world. "French, my dear Harry," he continued, "is the key to this second education. In a couple of years or so you will enter the world; it's a different thing to what you read about. It's a masquerade; a motley sparkling multitude, in which you may mark all forms and colours, and listen to all sentiments and opinions; but where all you see and hear has only one object—plunder. When you get into this crowd you will find that Greek and Latin are not so much diffused as you imagine. I was glad to hear you speaking French yesterday. Study your accent. There are a good many foreigners

here with whom you may try your wing a little; don't talk to any of them too much. Be very careful of intimacies. All the people here are good acquaintance; at least pretty well. Now, here," said the Marquess, taking up a letter and then throwing it on the table again, "now here is a man whom I should like you to know, Sidonia. He will be here in a few days. Lay yourself out for him if you have the opportunity. He is a man of rare capacity, and enormously rich. No one knows the world like Sidonia. I never met his equal; and 'tis so pleasant to talk with one that can want nothing of you."

Lord Monmouth had invited Coningsby to take a drive with him in the afternoon. The Marquess wished to show a part of his domain to the ambassadress. Only Lucretia, he said, would be with them, and there was a place for him. This invitation was readily accepted by Coningsby, who was not yet sufficiently established in the habits of the house exactly to know how to pass his morning. His friend and patron Mr. Rigby was

entirely taken up with the Archduke, whom he was accompanying all over the neighbourhood, in visits to manufactures, many of which Rigby himself saw for the first time, but all of which he fluently explained to his Imperial Highness. In return for this, he extracted much information from the Archduke on Russian plans and projects, materials for a "slashing" article against the Russophobia that he was preparing, and in which he was to prove that Muscovite aggression was an English interest, and entirely to be explained by the want of sea-coast, which drove the Czar, for the pure purposes of commerce, to the Baltic and the Euxine.

When the hour for the drive arrived, Coningsby found Lucretia, a young girl when he had first seen her only four years back, and still his junior, in that majestic dame who had conceded a superb recognition to him the preceding eve. She really looked older than Madame Colonna; who, very beautiful, very young looking, and mistress of the real arts of the toilette, those that cannot

be detected, was not in the least altered since she first so cordially saluted Coningsby, as her dear young friend at Monmouth House.

The day was delightful, the park extensive and picturesque, the Ambassadress sparkling with anecdote, and occasionally, in a low voice, breathing a diplomatic hint to Lord Monmouth, who bowed his graceful consciousness of her distinguished confidence. Coningsby occasionally took advantage of one of those moments, when the conversation ceased to be general, to address Lucretia, who replied in calm, fine, smiles, and in affable monosyllables. She indeed generally succeeded in conveying an impression to those she addressed, that she had never seen them before, did not care to see them now, and never wished to see them again. And all this too with an air of great courtesy.

They arrived at the brink of a wooded bank; at their feet flowed a very fine river, deep and rushing, though not broad; its opposite bank the boundary of a richly timbered park.

"Ah! this is beautiful!" exclaimed the Am-

bassadress. "And is that yours, Lord Monmouth?"

"Not yet," said the Marquess. "That is Hellingsley; it is one of the finest places in the county, with a splendid estate; not so considerable as Coningsby, but very great. It belongs to an old, a very old man, without a relative in the world. It is known that the estate will be sold at his death, which may be almost daily expected. Then it is mine. No one can offer for it what I can afford. For it gives me this division of the county, Princess. To possess Hellingsley is one of my objects." The Marquess spoke with an animation unusual with him, almost with a degree of excitement.

The wind met them as they returned, the breeze blew rather freshly. Lucretia all of a sudden seemed touched with unusual emotion. She was alarmed lest Lord Monmouth should catch cold; she took a kerchief from her own well-turned throat to tie round his neck. He feebly resisted, evidently much pleased.

The Princess Lucretia was highly accomplished. In the evening, having refused several

distinguished guests, but instantly yielding to the request of Lord Monmouth, she sang. It was impossible to conceive a contralto of more thrilling power, or an execution more worthy of the voice. Coningsby, who was not experienced in fine singing, listened as if to a supernatural lay, but all agreed it was of the highest class of nature and of art; and the Archduke was in raptures. Lucretia received even his Highness's compliments with a graceful indifference. Indeed to those who watched her demeanour, it might be remarked that she seemed to yield to none, although all bowed before her.

Madame Colonna, who was always extremely kind to Coningsby, expressed to him her gratification from the party of the morning. It must have been delightful, she assured Coningsby, for Lord Monmouth to have had both Lucretia and his grandson with him; and Lucretia too, she added, must have been so pleased.

Coningsby could not make out why Madame Colonna was always intimating to him that the Princess Lucretia took such great interest in

his existence, looked forward with such gratification to his society, remembered with so much pleasure the past, anticipated so much happiness from the future. It appeared to him that he was to Lucretia, if not an object of repugnance, as he sometimes fancied, certainly one only of absolute indifference; but he said nothing. He had already lived long enough to know that it is unwise to wish every thing explained.

In the meantime, his life was agreeable. Every day he found added to his acquaintance. He was never without a companion to ride or to shoot with; and of riding Coningsby was very fond. His grandfather too was continually giving him good-natured turns, and making him of consequence in the castle; so that all the guests were fully impressed with the importance of Lord Monmouth's grandson. Lady St. Julians pronounced him distinguished; the Ambassadress thought diplomacy should be his part as he had a fine person and a clear brain; Madame Colonna spoke of him always as if she took intense interest in his career, and declared

that she liked him almost as much as Lucretia did; the Russians persisted in always styling him "the young Marquess," notwithstanding the Ambassador's explanations; Mrs. Guy Flouncey made a dashing attack on him; but Coningsby remembered a lesson which Lady Everingham had graciously bestowed on him. He was not to be caught again easily. Besides Mrs. Guy Flouncey laughed a little too much, and talked a little too loud.

As time flew on, there were changes of visitors, chiefly among the single men. At the end of the first week after Coningsby's arrival, Lord Eskdale appeared, bringing with him Lucian Gay; and soon after followed the Marquess of Beaumanoir, and Mr. Melton. These were all heroes who, in their way, interested the ladies, and whose advent was hailed with general satisfaction. Even Lucretia would relax a little to Lord Eskdale. He was one of her oldest friends, and with a simplicity of manner which amounted almost to plainness, and with rather a cynical nonchalance in his carriage towards men, Lord Eskdale was invariably a favourite with

women. To be sure his station was eminent; he was noble, and very rich, and very powerful, and these are qualities which tell as much with the softer as the harsher sex;—but there are individuals with all these qualities who are nevertheless unpopular with women. Lord Eskdale was easy, knew the world thoroughly, had no prejudices, and above all, had a reputation for success. A reputation for success has as much influence with women, as a reputation for wealth has with men. Both reputations may be, and often are, unjust; but we see persons daily make good fortunes by them all the same. Lord Eskdale was not an impostor; and though he might not have been so successful a man had he not been Lord Eskdale, still thrown over by a revolution, he would have lighted on his legs.

The arrival of this nobleman was the occasion of giving a good turn to poor Flora. He went immediately to see his friend Villebecque and his troop. Indeed it was a sort of society which pleased Lord Eskdale more than that which is deemed more refined. He was very sorry about

"La Petite;" but thought that everything would come right in the long run; and told Villebecque that he was glad to hear him well spoken of here, especially by the Marquess, who seemed to take to him. As for Flora, he was entirely against her attempting the stage again, at least for the present, but as she was a good musician, and sang a good second, he suggested to the Princess Lucretia one night, that the subordinate aid of Flora might be of service to her, and permit her to favour her friends with some pieces which otherwise she must deny to them. This suggestion was successful; Flora was introduced occasionally, soon often, to their parties in the evening, and her performances were in every respect satisfactory. There was nothing to excite the jealousy of Lucretia either in her style or her person. And yet she sang well enough, and was a quiet, refined, retiring, by no means disagreeable person. She was the companion of Lucretia very often in the morning as well as in the illumined saloon; for the Princess was very devoted to the art in which she excelled. This connection on the whole

contributed to the happiness of poor Flora. True it was, in the evening she often found herself sitting or standing alone and no one noticing her; she had no dazzling quality to attract men of fashion, who themselves love to worship ever the fashionable. Even their goddesses must be "à la mode." But Coningsby never omitted an opportunity to show Flora some kindness under these circumstances. He always came and talked to her, and praised her singing, and would sometimes hand her refreshments and give her his arm if necessary. These slight attentions coming from the grandson of Lord Monmouth were for the world redoubled in their value; though Flora thought only of their essential kindness; all in character with that first visit which dwelt on the poor girl's memory, though it had long ago escaped that of her visitor. For in truth Coningsby had no other impulse for his conduct but kind-heartedness.

Thus we have attempted to give some faint idea how life glided away at the castle the first fortnight that Coningsby passed there. Perhaps we ought not to omit that Mrs. Guy Flouncey, to

the infinite disgust of Lady St. Julians who had a daughter with her, successfully entrapped the devoted attentions of the young Marquess of Beaumanoir, who was never very backward if a lady would take trouble enough; while his friend Mr. Melton, whose barren homage Lady St. Julians wished her daughter ever particularly to shun, employed all his gaiety, good humour, frivolity and fashion, in amusing that young lady, and with irresistible effect. For the rest, they continued, though they had only partridges to shoot, to pass the morning without weariness. The weather was fine; the stud numerous; all might be mounted. The Archduke and his suite, guided by Mr. Rigby, had always some objects to visit, and railroads returned them just in time for the banquet with an appetite which they had earned, and during which Rigby recounted their achievements, and his own opinions.

The dinner was always first rate; the evening never failed; music, dancing and the theatre, offered great resources independent of the soul-subduing sentiment harshly called flirtation, and

which is the spell of a country-house. Lord Monmouth was satisfied for he had scarcely ever felt wearied. All that he required in life was to be amused; perhaps that was not all he required, but it was indispensable. Nor was it wonderful that on the present occasion he obtained his purpose, for there were half a hundred of the brightest eyes and quickest brains ever on the watch or the whirl, to secure him distraction. The only circumstance that annoyed him was the non-arrival of Sidonia. Lord Monmouth could not bear to be disappointed. He could not refrain from saying notwithstanding all the resources and all the exertions of his guests:

"I cannot understand why Sidonia does not come. I wish Sidonia were here."

"So do I," said Lord Eskdale, "Sidonia is the only man who tells one anything new."

"We saw Sidonia at Lord Studcaster's," said the Marquess of Beaumanoir. "He told Melton he was coming here."

"You know he has bought all Studcaster's horses," said Mr. Melton.

"I wonder he does not buy Studcaster himself," said Lord Monmouth, "I would if I were he; Sidonia can buy anything," he turned to Mrs. Guy Flouncey.

"I wonder who Sidonia is," thought Mrs. Guy Flouncey, but she was determined no one should suppose she did not know.

At length one day Coningsby met Madame Colonna in the vestibule before dinner.

"Milor is in such good temper, Mr. Coningsby," she said; "Monsieur de Sidonia has arrived."

About ten minutes before dinner there was a stir in the chamber. Coningsby looked round. He saw the Archduke advancing, and holding out his hand in a manner the most gracious. A gentleman, of distinguished air, but with his back turned to Coningsby, was bowing as he received his Highness's greeting. There was a general pause in the room. Several came forward: even the Marquess seemed a little moved. Coningsby could not resist the impulse of curiosity to see this individual of whom he had heard so much. He glided round

the room, and caught the countenance of his companion in the forest inn; he who announced to him, that "the Age of Ruins was past."

CHAPTER X.

SIDONIA was descended from a very ancient and noble family of Arragon, that, in the course of ages, had given to the state many distinguished citizens. In the priesthood its members had been peculiarly eminent. Besides several prelates, they counted among their number an Archbishop of Toledo; and a Sidonia, in a season of great danger and difficulty, had exercised for a series of years the paramount office of Grand Inquisitor.

Yet, strange as it may sound, it is nevertheless a fact of which there is no lack of evidence, that this illustrious family during all this period,

in common with two-thirds of the Arragonese nobility, secretly adhered to the ancient faith and ceremonies of their fathers—a belief in the unity of the God of Sinai, and the rites and observances of the laws of Moses.

Whence came those Hebrew Arabs whose passage across the strait from Africa to Europe long preceded the invasion of the Mohammedan Arabs, it is now possible to ascertain. Their traditions tell us that from time immemorial they had sojourned in Africa; and it is not improbable that they may have been the descendants of some of the earlier dispersions; like those Hebrew colonies that we find in China, and who probably emigrated from Persia in the days of the great monarchies. Whatever may have been their origin in Africa, their fortunes in southern Europe are not difficult to trace, though the annals of no race in no age can detail a history of such strange vicissitudes, or one rife with more touching and romantic incident. Their unexampled prosperity in the Spanish Peninsula, and especially in the south, where they had become the principal cultivators of the soil, excited

the jealousy of the Goths, and the Councils of Toledo during the sixth and seventh centuries attempted, by a series of decrees worthy of the barbarians who promulgated them, to root the Jewish Arabs out of the land. There is no doubt the Council of Toledo led as directly as the lust of Roderick to the invasion of Spain by the Moslemin Arabs. The Jewish population suffering under the most sanguinary and atrocious persecution looked to their sympathizing brethren of the Crescent, whose camps already gleamed on the opposite shore. The overthrow of the Gothic kingdoms was as much achieved by the superior information which the Saracens received from their suffering kinsmen, as by the resistless valour of the Desart. The Saracen kingdoms were established. That fair and unrivalled civilization arose, which preserved for Europe arts and letters when Christendom was plunged in darkness. The children of Ishmael rewarded the children of Israel with equal rights and privileges with themselves. During these halcyon centuries, it is difficult to distinguish the follower of Moses from the

votary of Mahomet. Both alike built palaces, gardens and fountains; filled equally the highest offices of the state, competed in an extensive and enlightened commerce, and rivalled each other in renowned universities.

Even after the fall of the principal Moorish kingdoms, the Jews of Spain were still treated by the conquering Goths with tenderness and consideration. Their numbers, their wealth, the fact that, in Arragon especially, they were the proprietors of the soil, and surrounded by warlike and devoted followers, secured for them an usage which for a considerable period made them little sensible of the change of dynasties and religions. But the tempest gradually gathered. As the Goths grew stronger, persecution became more bold. Where the Jewish population was scanty, they were deprived of their privileges or obliged to conform under the title of "Nuovos Christianos." At length the union of the two crowns under Ferdinand and Isabella, and the fall of the last Moorish kingdom, brought the crisis of their fate both to the New Christian and the non-conforming Hebrew. The Inquisition appeared,

the Institution that had exterminated the Albigenses and had desolated Languedoc, and which it should ever be remembered was established in the Spanish kingdoms against the protests of the Cortes and amid the terror of the populace. The Dominicans opened their first tribunal at Seville, and it is curious that the first individuals they summoned before them were the Duke of Medina Sidonia, the Marquess of Cadiz, and the Count of Arcos; three of the most considerable personages in Spain. How many were burned alive at Seville during the first year, how many imprisoned for life, what countless thousands were visited with severe though lighter punishments, need not be recorded here. In nothing was the Holy Office more happy than in multiform and subtle means by which they tested the sincerity of the New Christians.

At length the Inquisition was to be extended to Arragon. The high-spirited nobles of that kingdom knew that its institution was for them a matter of life or death. The Cortes of Arragon appealed to the King and to the Pope; they organized an extensive conspiracy; the

chief Inquisitor was assassinated in the Cathedral of Saragossa. Alas! it was fated that in this, one of the many, and continual, and continuing struggles between the rival organizations of the North and the South, the children of the sun should fall. The fagot and the San Benito were the doom of the nobles of Arragon. Those who were convicted of secret Judaism, and this scarcely three centuries ago, were dragged to the stake; the sons of the noblest houses, in whose veins the Hebrew taint could be traced, had to walk in solemn procession singing psalms and confessing their faith in the religion of the fell Torquamada.

This triumph in Arragon, the almost simultaneous fall of the last Moorish kingdom, raised the hopes of the pure Christians to the highest pitch. Having purged the new Christians, they next turned their attention to the old Hebrews. Ferdinand was resolved that the delicious air of Spain should be breathed no longer by any one who did not profess the Catholic faith. Baptism or exile was the alternative. More than six hundred thousand individuals, some

authorities greatly increase the amount, the most industrious, the most intelligent, and the most enlightened of Spanish subjects would not desert the religion of their fathers. For this they gave up the delightful land wherein they had lived for centuries, the beautiful cities they had raised, the universities from which Christendom drew for ages its most precious lore, the tombs of their ancestors, the temples where they had worshipped the God for whom they had made this sacrifice. They had but four months to prepare for eternal exile after a residence of as many centuries, during which brief period forced sales and glutted markets virtually confiscated their property. It is a calamity that the scattered nation still ranks with the desolations of Nebuchadnezzar and of Titus. Who after this should say the Jews are by nature a sordid people? But the Spanish Goth then so cruel and so haughty, where is he? A despised suppliant to the very race which he banished for some miserable portion of the treasure which their habits of industry have again accumulated. Where is that tribunal

that summoned Medina Sidonia and Cadiz to its dark inquisition? Where is Spain? Its fall, its unparalleled and its irremediable fall, is mainly to be attributed to the expulsion of that large portion of its subjects, the most industrious and intelligent, who traced their origin to the Mosaic and Mahomedan Arabs.

The Sidonias of Arragon were Nuovos Christianos. Some of them no doubt were burned alive at the end of the fifteenth century under the system of Torquamada, many of them doubtless wore the San Benito; but they kept their titles and estates; and in time reached those great offices to which we have referred.

During the long disorders of the Peninsular war, when so many openings were offered to talent, and so many opportunities seized by the adventurous, a cadet of a younger branch of this family made a large fortune by military contracts, and supplying the commissariat of the different armies. At the peace, prescient of the great financial future of Europe, confident in the fertility of his own genius, in his original views of fiscal subjects, and his knowledge of

national resources, this Sidonia, feeling that Madrid, or even Cadiz, could never be a base on which the monetary transactions of the world could be regulated, resolved to emigrate to England, with which he had in the course of years formed considerable commercial connections. He arrived here after the peace of Paris with his large capital. He staked all that he was worth on the Waterloo loan; and the event made him one of the greatest capitalists in Europe.

No sooner was Sidonia established in England, than he professed Judaism; which Torquamada flattered himself, with the fagot and the San Benito, he had drained out of the veins of his family more than three centuries ago. He sent over also for several of his brothers who were as good Catholics in Spain as Ferdinand and Isabella could have possibly desired, but who made an offering in the synagogue, in gratitude for their safe voyage, on their arrival in England.

Sidonia had foreseen in Spain, that after the exhaustion of a war of twenty-five years, Europe must require capital to carry on peace.

He reaped the due reward of his sagacity. Europe did require money, and Sidonia was ready to lend it to Europe. France wanted some; Austria more; Prussia a little; Russia a few millions. Sidonia could furnish them all. The only country which he avoided was Spain; he was too well acquainted with its resources. Nothing too would ever tempt him to lend anything to the revolted colonies of Spain. Prudence saved him from being a creditor of the mother country; his Spanish pride recoiled from the rebellion of her children.

It is not difficult to conceive that after having pursued the career we have intimated for about ten years, Sidonia had become one of the most considerable personages in Europe. He had established a brother or a near relative in whom he could confide, in most of the principal capitals. He was lord and master of the money-market of the world, and of course virtually lord and master of everything else. He literally held the revenues of Southern Italy in pawn; and monarchs and ministers of all countries courted his advice and were guided by his suggestions. He

was still in the vigor of life, and was not a mere money-making machine. He had a general intelligence equal to his position, and looked forward to the period when some relaxation from his vast enterprises and exertions might enable him to direct his energies to great objects of public benefit. But in the height of this vast prosperity he suddenly died, leaving only one child, a youth still of tender years, and heir to the greatest fortune in Europe, so great indeed that it could only be calculated by millions.

Shut out from universities and schools, those universities and schools which were indebted for their first knowledge of ancient philosophy to the learning and enterprise of his ancestors, the young Sidonia was fortunate in the tutor whom his father had procured for him, and who devoted to his charge all the resources of his trained intellect and vast and various erudition. A Jesuit before the revolution; since then an exiled Liberal leader; now a member of the Spanish Cortes; Rebello was always a Jew. He found in his pupil that precocity of intellectual development which is characteristic of the Arabian

organization. The young Sidonia penetrated the highest mysteries of mathematics with a facility almost instinctive; while a memory, which never had any twilight hours, but always reflected a noontide clearness, seemed to magnify his acquisitions of ancient learning by the promptness with which they could be re-produced and applied.

The circumstances of his position too had early contributed to give him an unusual command over the modern languages. An Englishman, and taught from his cradle to be proud of being an Englishman, he first evinced in speaking his native language those remarkable powers of expression, and that clear and happy elocution, which ever afterwards distinguished him. But the son of a Spaniard, the sonorous syllables of that noble tongue constantly resounded in his ear; while the foreign guests who thronged his father's mansion habituated him from an early period of life to the tones of languages that were not long strange to him. When he was nineteen, Sidonia, who had then resided sometime with his uncle at Naples, and

had made a long visit to another of his father's relatives at Frankfort, possessed a complete mastery over the principal European languages.

At seventeen he had parted with Rebello who returned to Spain, and Sidonia, under the control of his guardians, commenced his travels. He resided as we have mentioned some time in Germany, and then, having visited Italy, settled at Naples, at which city it may be said he made his entrance into life. With a very interesting person, and highly accomplished, he availed himself of the gracious attentions of a Court of which he was principal creditor; and which treating him as a distinguished English traveller were enabled perhaps to show him some favours that the manners of the country might not have permitted them to accord to his Neapolitan relatives. Sidonia thus obtained at a very early age that experience of refined and luxurious society, which is a necessary part of a finished education. It gives the last polish to the manners; it teaches us something of the power of the passions, early developed in the hot

bed of self-indulgence; it instils into us that indefinable tact seldom obtained in later life, which prevents us from saying the wrong thing, and often impels us to do the right.

Between Paris and Naples Sidonia passed two years, spent apparently in the dissipation which was perhaps inseparable from his time of life. He was admired by women, to whom he was magnificent, idolized by artists whom he patronized, received in all circles with great distinction, and appreciated for his intellect by the very few to whom he at all opened himself. For though affable and gracious, it was impossible to penetrate him. Though very unreserved in his manner, his frankness was strictly limited to the surface. He observed everything, thought ever, but avoided serious discussion. If you pressed him for an opinion, he took refuge in raillery, or threw out some grave paradox with which it was not easy to cope.

The moment he came of age, Sidonia, having previously, at a great family congress held at Naples, made arrangements with the heads of the houses that bore his name respecting

the disposition and management of his vast fortune, quitted Europe.

Sidonia was absent from his connexions for five years, during which period he never communicated with them. They were aware of his existence only by the orders which he drew on them for payment, and which frequently arrived from all quarters of the globe. It would appear from these documents that he had dwelt a considerable time in the Mediterranean regions; penetrated Nilotic Africa to Sennaar and Abyssinia; traversed the Asiatic continent to Tartary, whence he had visited Hindostan, and the isles of that Indian sea which are so little known. Afterwards he was heard of at Valparaiso, the Brazils, and Lima. He evidently remained some time at Mexico, which he quitted for the United States. One morning without notice he arrived in London.

Sidonia had exhausted all the sources of human knowledge; he was master of the learning of every nation, of all tongues dead or living, of every literature, Western and Oriental. He had pursued the speculations of science

to their last term, and had himself illustrated them by observation and experiment. He had lived in all orders of society, had viewed every combination of Nature and of Art, and had observed man under every phasis of civilization. He had even studied him in the wilderness. The influence of creeds and laws, manners, customs, traditions, in all their diversities, had been subjected to his personal scrutiny.

He brought to the study of this vast aggregate of knowledge a penetrative intellect, that matured by long meditation, and assisted by that absolute freedom from prejudice, which was the compensatory possession of a man without a country, permitted Sidonia to fathom as it were by intuition, the depth of questions apparently the most difficult and profound. He possessed the rare faculty of communicating with precision ideas the most abstruse, and in general a power of expression which arrests and satisfies attention.

With all this knowledge, which no one knew more to prize, with boundless wealth, and with an athletic frame which sickness had never

tried, and which had avoided excess, Sidonia nevertheless looked upon life with a glance rather of curiosity than content. His religion walled him out from the pursuits of a citizen; his riches deprived him of the stimulating anxieties of a man. He perceived himself a lone being, alike without cares and without duties.

To a man in his position there might yet seem one unfailing source of felicity and joy; independent of creed, independent of country, independent even of character. He might have discovered that perpetual spring of happiness in the sensibility of the heart. But this was a sealed fountain to Sidonia. In his organization there was a peculiarity, perhaps a great deficiency. He was a man without affections. It would be harsh to say he had no heart, for he was susceptible of deep emotions, but not for individuals. He was capable of re-building a town that was burned down; of restoring a colony that had been destroyed by some awful visitation of nature; of redeeming to liberty a horde of captives; and of doing these great

acts in secret; for void of all self-love, public approbation was worthless to him; but the individual never touched him. Woman was to him a toy, man a machine.

The lot the most precious to man, and which a beneficent Providence has made not the least common; to find in another heart a perfect and profound sympathy; to unite his existence with one who could share all his joys, soften all his sorrows, aid him in all his projects, respond to all his fancies, counsel him in his cares, and support him in his perils; make life charming by her charms, interesting by her intelligence, and sweet by the vigilant variety of her tenderness; to find your life blessed by such an influence, and to feel that your influence can bless such a life: this lot, the most divine of divine gifts, that power and even fame can never rival in its delights—all this Nature had denied to Sidonia.

With an imagination as fiery as his native Desart, and an intellect as luminous as his native sky, he wanted like that land those softening dews without which the soil is barren, and the

sunbeam as often a messenger of pestilence as an angel of regenerative grace.

Such a temperament, though rare, is peculiar to the East. It inspired the founders of the great monarchies of antiquity, the prophets that the Desart has sent forth, the Tartar chiefs who have overrun the world; it might be observed in the great Corsican, who, like most of the inhabitants of the Mediterranean isles, had probably Arab blood in his veins. It is a temperament that befits conquerors and legislators, but in ordinary times and ordinary situations, entails on its possessor only eccentric aberrations or profound melancholy.

The only human quality that interested Sidonia was Intellect. He cared not whence it came; where it was to be found: creed, country, class, character, in this respect, were alike indifferent to him. The author, the artist, the man of science, never appealed to him in vain. Often he anticipated their wants and wishes. He encouraged their society; was as frank in his conversation as he was generous in his contributions; but the instant they ceased to be

authors, artists, or philosophers, and their communications arose from any thing but the intellectual quality which had originally interested him, the moment they were rash enough to approach intimacy and appealed to the sympathizing man instead of the congenial intelligence, he saw them no more. It was not however intellect merely in these unquestionable shapes that commanded his notice. There was not an adventurer in Europe with whom he was not familiar. No Minister of State had such communication with secret agents and political spies as Sidonia. He held relations with all the clever outcasts of the world. The catalogue of his acquaintance in the shape of Greeks, Armenians, Moors, secret Jews, Tartars, Gypsies, wandering Poles and Carbonari, would throw a curious light on those subterranean agencies of which the world in general knows so little, but which exercise so great an influence on public events. His extensive travels, his knowledge of languages, his daring and adventurous disposition, and his unlimited means, had given him opportunities of becoming acquainted with these

characters, in general so difficult to trace, and of gaining their devotion. To these sources he owed that knowledge of strange and hidden things which often startled those who listened to him. Nor was it easy, scarcely possible, to deceive him. Information reached him from so many, and such contrary quarters, that with his discrimination and experience, he could almost instantly distinguish the truth. The secret history of the world was his pastime. His great pleasure was to contrast the hidden motive, with the public pretext, of transactions.

One source of interest Sidonia found in his descent, and in the fortunes of his race. As firm in his adherence to the code of the great Legislator as if the trumpet still sounded on Sinai, he might have received in the conviction of divine favour an adequate compensation for human persecution. But there were other and more terrestrial considerations that made Sidonia proud of his origin, and confident in the future of his kind. Sidonia was a great philosopher, who took comprehensive views of human affairs, and surveyed every fact in its relative position

to other facts, the only mode of obtaining truth.

Sidonia was well aware that in the five great varieties in which Physiology has divided the human species; to wit, the Caucasian, the Mongolian, the Malayan, the American, the Ethiopian; the Arabian tribes rank in the first and superior class, together, among others, with the Saxon and the Greek. This fact alone is a source of great pride and satisfaction to the animal Man. But Sidonia and his brethren could claim a distinction which the Saxon and the Greek, and the rest of the Caucasian nations, have forfeited. The Hebrew is an unmixed race. Doubtless among the tribes who inhabit the bosom of the Desart, progenitors alike of the Mosaic and the Mahomedan Arabs, blood may be found as pure as that of the descendants of the Scheik Abraham. But the Mosaic Arabs are the most ancient, if not the only, unmixed blood that dwells in cities.

An unmixed race of a first-rate organization are the aristocracy of Nature. Such excellence is a positive fact; not an imagination, a cere-

mony, coined by poets, blazoned by cozening heralds, but perceptible in its physical advantages, and in the vigour of its unsullied idiosyncracy.

In his comprehensive travels, Sidonia had visited and examined the Hebrew communities of the world. He had found in general the lower orders debased; the superior immersed in sordid pursuits; but he perceived that the intellectual development was not impaired. This gave him hope. He was persuaded that organization would outlive persecution. When he reflected on what they had endured, it was only marvellous that the race had not disappeared. They had defied exile, massacre, spoliation, the degrading influence of the constant pursuit of gain; they had defied Time. For nearly three thousand years, according to Archbishop Usher, they have been dispersed over the globe. To the unpolluted current of their Caucasian structure and to the segregating genius of their great Lawgiver, Sidonia ascribed the fact that they had not been long ago absorbed among those mixed races, who presume to persecute them, but who periodically

wear away and disappear, while their victims still flourish, in all the primeval vigour of the pure Asian breed.

Shortly after his arrival in England, Sidonia repaired to the principal courts of Europe, that he might become personally acquainted with the monarchs and ministers of whom he had heard so much. His position insured him a distinguished reception; his personal qualities immediately made him cherished. He could please; he could do more; he could astonish. He could throw out a careless observation which would make the oldest diplomatist start; a winged word that gained him the consideration, sometimes the confidence, of Sovereigns. When he had fathomed the intelligence which governs Europe, and which can only be done by personal acquaintance, he returned to this country.

The somewhat hard and literal character of English life suited one who shrank from sensibility, and often took refuge in sarcasm. Its masculine vigour and active intelligence occupied and interested his mind. Sidonia indeed was exactly the character who would be welcomed in

our circles. His immense wealth, his unrivalled social knowledge, his clear vigorous intellect, the severe simplicity of his manners, frank, but never claiming nor brooking familiarity, and his devotion to field sports, which was the safety-valve of his energy, were all circumstances and qualities which the English appreciate and admire; and it may be fairly said of Sidonia that few men were more popular, and none less understood.

CHAPTER XI.

At dinner Coningsby was seated on the same side as Sidonia, and distant from him. There had been therefore no mutual recognition. Another guest had also arrived, Mr. Ormsby. He came straight from London, full of rumours, had seen Tadpole, who hearing he was on the wing for Coningsby Castle, had taken him into a dark corner of his club, and shown him his book, a very safe piece of confidence as Mr. Ormsby was very near-sighted. It was however to be received as an undoubted fact, that all was right, and somehow or other, before very long, there would be national demonstration of the same. This arrival of Mr. Ormsby and the news that he

bore, gave a political turn to the conversation after the ladies had left the room.

"Tadpole wants me to stand for Birmingham," said Mr. Ormsby, gravely.

"You!" exclaimed Lord Monmouth, and throwing himself back in his chair, he broke into a real, hearty laugh.

"Yes; the Conservatives mean to start two candidates; a manufacturer they have got, and they have written up to Tadpole for a "West-end man."

"A what?"

"A West-end man, who will make the ladies patronize their fancy articles."

"The result of the Reform Bill then," said Lucian Gay, "will be to give Manchester a bishop, and Birmingham a dandy."

"I begin to believe the result will be very different to what we expected," said Lord Monmouth.

Mr. Rigby shook his head and was going to prophesy, when Lord Eskdale, who liked talk to be short, and was of opinion that Rigby should keep his amplifications for his slashing articles,

put in a brief careless observation, which baulked his inspiration.

"Certainly," said Mr. Ormsby, "when the guns were firing over Vyvyan's last speech and confession, I never expected to be asked to stand for Birmingham."

"Perhaps you may be called up to the other house by the title," said Lucian Gay. "Who knows?"

"I agree with Tadpole," said Mr. Ormsby, "that if we only stick to the Registration, the country is saved."

"Fortunate country!" said Sidonia, "that can be saved by a good registration!"

"I believe after all that with property and pluck," said Lord Monmouth, "Parliamentary Reform is not such a very bad thing."

Here several gentlemen began talking at the same time, all agreeing with their host and proving in their different ways, the irresistible influence of property and pluck;—property in Lord Monmouth's mind meaning vassals; and pluck, a total disregard for public opinion. Mr. Guy Flouncey, who wanted to get into parliament,

but why nobody knew, who had neither political abilities, nor political opinions, but had some floating idea that it would get himself and his wife to some more balls and dinners, and who was duly ticketed for "a good thing" in the candidate list of the Tadpoles and the Tapers, was of opinion that an immense deal might be done by properly patronising borough races. That was his specific how to prevent revolution.

Taking advantage of a pause, Lord Monmouth said, "I should like to know what you think of this question, Sidonia."

"I am scarcely a competent judge," he said as if wishing to disclaim any interference in the conversation, and then added, "but I have been ever of opinion that revolutions are not to be evaded."

"Exactly my views," said Mr. Rigby eagerly, "I say it now, I have said it a thousand times, you may doctor the registration as you like, but you can never get rid of Schedule A."

"Is there a person in this room who can now

tell us the names of the boroughs in Schedule A ?" said Sidonia.

"I am surc I cannot," said Lord Monmouth, "though six of them belonged to myself."

"But the principle," said Mr. Rigby, "they represented a principle."

"Nothing else certainly," said Lucian Gay.

"And what principle ?" inquired Sidonia.

"The principle of nomination."

"That is a practice, not a principle," said Sidonia. "Is it a practice that no longer exists ?"

"You think then," said Lord Eskdale cutting in before Rigby, "that the Reform Bill has done us no harm ?"

"It is not the Reform Bill that has shaken the aristocracy of this country, but the means by which that Bill was carried," replied Sidonia.

"Physical force ?" said Lord Eskdale.

"Or social power ?" said Sidonia.

Upon this, Mr. Rigby impatient at any one giving the tone in a political discussion but himself, and chafing under the vigilance of Lord Eskdale which to him ever appeared only

fortuitous, violently assaulted the argument, and astonished several country gentlemen present by his volubility. They at length listened to real eloquence. At the end of a long appeal to Sidonia, that gentleman only bowed his head, and said, "Perhaps;" and then turning to his neighbour, inquired whether birds were plentiful in Lancashire this season; so that Mr. Rigby was reduced to the necessity of forming the political opinions of Mr. Guy Flouncey.

As the gentlemen left the dining-room, Coningsby though at some distance was observed by Sidonia, who stopped instantly, then advanced to Coningsby and extending his hand, said, "I said we should meet again, though I hardly expected so quickly."

"And I hope we shall not separate so soon," said Coningsby; "I was much struck with what you said just now about the Reform Bill. Do you know that the more I think, the more I am perplexed by what is meant by Representation."

"It is a principle of which a limited definition is only current in this country," said Sidonia

quitting the room with him. "People may be represented without periodical elections of neighbours who are incapable to maintain their interests, and strangers who are unwilling."

The entrance of the gentlemen produced the same effect on the saloon as sunrise on the world; universal animation, a general though gentle stir. The Archduke bowing to every one, devoted himself to the daughter of Lady St. Julians, who herself pinned Lord Beaumanoir before he could reach Mrs. Guy Flouncey. Coningsby instead talked nonsense to that lady. Brilliant cavaliers including Mr. Melton, addressed a band of beautiful damsels grouped on a large ottoman. Everywhere sounded a delicious murmur, broken occasionally by a silver-sounding laugh not too loud. Sidonia and Lord Eskdale did not join the ladies. They stood for a few moments in conversation, and then threw themselves on a sofa.

"Who is that?" asked Sidonia of his companion rather earnestly, as Coningsby quitted them.

"'Tis the grandson of Monmouth; young Coningsby."

"Ah! The new generation then promises. I met him once before, by chance; he interests me."

"They tell me he is a lively lad. He is a prodigious favourite here, and I should not be surprised if Monmouth made him his heir."

"I hope he does not dream of inheritances," said Sidonia. "'Tis the most enervating of visions."

"Do you admire Lady Augustina St. Julians?" said Mrs. Guy Flouncey to Coningsby.

"I admire no one except yourself."

"Oh! how very gallant, Mr. Coningsby!"

"When should men be gallant, if not to the brilliant and the beautiful!" said Coningsby.

"Ah! you are laughing at me."

"No, I am not. I am quite grave."

"Your eyes laugh. Now tell me, Mr. Coningsby, Lord Henry Sydney is a very great friend of yours?"

"Very."

"He is very amiable?"

"Very."

"He does a great deal for the poor at Beaumanoir? A very fine place is it not?"

"Very."

"As fine as Coningsby?"

"At present with Mrs. Guy Flouncey at Coningsby, Beaumanoir would have no chance."

"Ah! you laugh at me again! Now tell me, Mr. Coningsby, what do you think we shall do to-night? I look upon you, you know, as the real arbiter of our destinies."

"You shall decide," said Coningsby.

"Mon cher Harry," said Madame Colonna coming up; "they wish Lucretia to sing, and she will not. You must ask her, she cannot refuse you."

"I assure you she can," said Coningsby.

"Mon cher Harry, your grandpapa did desire me to beg you to ask her to sing."

So Coningsby unwillingly approached Lucretia who was talking with the Russian Ambassador.

"I am sent upon a fruitless mission," said Coningsby looking at her, and catching her glance.

"What and why?" she replied.

"The mission is to entreat you to do us all a great favour; and the cause of its failure will be, that I am the envoy."

"If the favour be one to yourself, it is granted; and if you be the envoy, you need never fear failure with me."

"I must presume then to lead you away," said Coningsby bending to the Ambassador.

"Remember," said Lucretia as they approached the instrument, "that I am singing to you."

"It is impossible ever to forget it," said Coningsby leading her to the piano with great politeness, but only with great politeness.

"Where is Mademoiselle Flora?" she inquired.

Coningsby found "La Petite" crouching as it were behind some furniture, and apparently looking over some music. She looked up as he approached, and a smile stole over her

countenance. "I am come to ask a favour," he said, and he named his request.

"I will sing," she replied; "but only tell me what you like."

Coningsby felt the difference between the courtesy of the head and of the heart, as he contrasted the manner of Lucretia and Flora. Nothing could be more exquisitely gracious than the daughter of Colonna was to-night; Flora, on the contrary, was rather agitated and embarrassed; and did not express her readiness with half the facility and the grace of Lucretia; but Flora's arm trembled as Coningsby led her to the piano.

Meantime Lord Eskdale and Sidonia are in deep converse.

"Hah! that is a fine note!" said Sidonia, and he looked round. "Who is that singing? Some new protégée of Lord Monmouth?"

"'Tis the daughter of the Colonnas," said Lord Eskdale, "the Princess Lucretia."

"Why, she was not at dinner to-day."

"No, she was not there."

"My favourite voice; and of all, the rarest

to be found. When I was a boy, it made me almost in love even with Pisaroni."

"Well, the Princess is scarcely more lovely. 'Tis a pity the plumage is not as beautiful as the note. She is plain."

"No; not plain with that brow."

"Well, I rather admire her myself," said Lord Eskdale. "She has fine points."

"Let us approach," said Sidonia.

The song ceased, Lord Eskdale advanced, made his compliments, and then said, "You were not at dinner to-day."

"Why should I be?" said the Princess.

"For our sakes, for mine, if not for your own," said Lord Eskdale, smiling. "Your absence has been remarked, and felt I assure you by others as well as myself. There is my friend Sidonia so enraptured with your thrilling tones, that he has abruptly closed a conversation which I have been long counting on. Do you know him? May I present him to you?"

And having obtained a consent not often conceded, Lord Eskdale looked round, and

calling Sidonia, he presented his friend to the Princess.

"You are fond of music, Lord Eskdale tells me?" said Lucretia.

"When it is excellent," said Sidonia.

"But that is so rare," said the Princess.

"And precious as Paradise," said Sidonia. "As for indifferent music 'tis Purgatory; but when it is bad, for my part I feel myself—"

"Where?" said Lord Eskdale.

"In the last circle of the Inferno," said Sidonia.

Lord Eskdale turned to Flora.

"And in what circle do you place us who are here?" inquired the Princess of Sidonia.

"One too polished for his verse," replied her companion.

"You mean too insipid," said the Princess. "I wish that life were a little more Dantesque."

"There is not less treasure in the world," said Sidonia, "because we use paper currency; and there is not less passion than of old, though it is bon-ton to be tranquil."

"Do you think so?" said the Princess in-

quiringly, and then looking round the apartment. "Have these automata indeed souls?"

"Some of them," said Sidonia. "As many as would have had souls in the fourteenth century."

"I thought they were wound up every day," said the Princess.

"Some are self-impelling," said Sidonia.

"And you can tell at a glance?" inquired the Princess. "You are one of those who can read human nature?"

"'Tis a book open to all."

"But if they cannot read?"

"Those must be your automata."

"Lord Monmouth tells me you are a great traveller."

"I have not discovered a new world."

"But you have visited it?"

"It is getting old."

"I would sooner recall the old than discover the new," said the Princess.

"We have both of us cause," said Sidonia. "Our names are the names of the Past."

"I do not love a world of Utility," said the Princess.

"You prefer to be celebrated to being comfortable," said Sidonia.

"It seems to me that the world is withering under routine."

"'Tis the inevitable lot of humanity," said Sidonia. "Man must ever be the slave of routine; but in old days it was a routine of great thoughts, and now it is a routine of little ones."

The evening glided on; the dance succeeded the song; the ladies were fast vanishing; Coningsby himself was meditating a movement, when the young Marquess as he passed him said, "Come to Lucian Gay's room; we are going to smoke a cigar."

This was a favourite haunt towards midnight of several of the younger members of the party at the castle who loved to find relaxation from the decorous gravities of polished life in the fumes of tobacco, the inspiration of whiskey toddy, and the infinite amusement of Lucian Gay's conversation and company. This was

the genial hour when the good story gladdened, the pun flashed, and the song sparkled with jolly mirth or saucy mimicry. To-night, being Coningsby's initiation, there was a special general meeting of the Grumpy Club, in which everybody was to say the gayest things with the gravest face, and every laugh carried a forfeit. Lucian was the inimitable president. He told a tale for which he was famous, of "the very respectable county family who had been established in the shire for several generations, but who (it was a fact) had been ever distinguished by the strange and humiliating peculiarity of being born with sheeps' tails." The remarkable circumstances under which Lucian Gay had become acquainted with this fact; the traditionary mysteries by which the family in question had succeeded for generations in keeping it secret; the decided measures to which the chief of the family had recourse to stop for ever the rumour when it first became prevalent; and finally the origin and result of the legend; were details which Lucian Gay with the most rueful countenance loved to expend upon the

attentive and expanding intelligence of a new member of the Grumpy Club. Familiar as all present were with the story whose stimulus of agonizing risibility they had all in turn experienced, it was with extreme difficulty that any of them could resist the fatal explosion which was to be attended with the dreaded penalty. The Marquess looked on the table with desperate seriousness, an ominous pucker quivering round his lip; Mr. Melton crammed his handkerchief into his mouth with one hand, while he lighted the wrong end of a cigar with the other; one youth hung over the back of his chair pinching himself like a faquir, while another hid his countenance on the table.

"It was at the Hunt dinner," continued Lucian Gay in an almost solemn tone, "that an idea for a moment was prevalent that Sir Mowbray Cholmondeley Fetherstonehaugh, as the head of the family, had resolved to terminate for ever these mysterious aspersions on his race that had circulated in the county for more than two centuries; I mean that the highly respectable family of the Cholmondeley Fether-

stonehaughs had the misfortune to be graced with that appendage to which I have referred. His health being drunk, Sir Mowbray Cholmondeley Fetherstonehaugh rose. He was a little unpopular at the moment from an ugly story about killing foxes, and the guests were not as quiet as orators generally desire, so the Honourable Baronet prayed particular attention to a matter personal to himself. Instantly there was a dead silence—" but here Coningsby, who had moved for sometime very restlessly on his chair suddenly started up, and struggling for a moment against the inward convulsion but in vain, stamped against the floor and gave a shout.

" A song from Mr. Coningsby," said the president of the Grumpy Club amid an universal and now permissible roar of laughter.

Coningsby could not sing; so he was to favour them as a substitute with a speech or a sentiment. But Lucian Gay always let one off these penalties easily, and indeed was ever ready to fulfil them for all. Song, speech, or sentiment, he poured them all forth; nor were

pastimes more active wanting. He could dance a Tarantalla like a Lazaroni, and execute a Cracovienne with all the mincing graces of an Opera heroine.

His powers of mimicry indeed were great and versatile. But in nothing was he so happy as in a Parliamentary debate. And it was remarkable that, though himself a man who on ordinary occasions was quite incapable without infinite perplexity of publicly expressing his sense of the merest courtesy of society, he was not only a master of the style of every speaker of distinction in either house, but he seemed in his imitative play to appropriate their intellectual as well as their physical peculiarities, and presented you with their mind as well as their manner. There were several attempts to-night to induce Lucian to indulge his guests with a debate, but he seemed to avoid the exertion, which was great. As the night grew old however, and every hour he grew more lively, he suddenly broke without further pressure into the promised diversion; and Coningsby listened really with admiration to a discussion, of which the only fault was that it

was more Parliamentary than the original; "plus Arabe que l'Arabie."

The Duke was never more curt, nor Sir Robert more specious; he was as fiery as Stanley, and as bitter as Graham. Nor did he do their opponents less justice. Lord Palmerston himself never treated a profound subject with a more pleasant volatility; and when Lucian rose at an early hour of morn, in a full house alike exhausted and excited, and after having endured for hours in sarcastic silence the menacing finger of Sir Robert shaking over the green table and appealing to his misdeeds in the irrevocable records of Hansard, Lord John himself could not have afforded a more perfect representative of pluck.

But loud as was the laughter, and vehement the cheering with which Lucian's performances were received, all these ebullitions sank into insignificance compared with the reception which greeted what he himself announced was to be the speech of the night. Having quaffed full many a quaigh of toddy, he insisted on delivering it on the table, a proposition with which his auditors immediately closed.

The orator appeared, the great man of the night, who was to answer everybody on both sides. Ah! that harsh voice, that arrogant style, that saucy superficiality which decided on everything, that insolent ignorance that contradicted everybody; it was impossible to mistake them! And Coningsby had the pleasure of seeing reproduced before him the guardian of his youth, and the patron of the mimic—the Right Honourable Nicholas Rigby!

CHAPTER XII.

MADAME Colonna with that vivacious energy which characterises the south, had no sooner seen Coningsby, and heard his praises celebrated by his grandfather, than she resolved that an alliance should sooner or later take place between him and her step-daughter. She imparted her projects without delay to Lucretia, who received them in a very different spirit to that in which they were communicated. Lucretia bore as little resemblance to her step-mother in character, as in person. If she did not possess her beauty, she was born with an intellect of far greater capacity and reach. She had a deep judgment. A hasty alliance with a youth,

arranged by their mutual relatives, might suit very well the clime and manners of Italy, but Lucretia was well aware that it was altogether opposed to the habits and feelings of this country. She had no conviction that either Coningsby would wish to marry her, or if willing, that his grandfather would sanction such a step in one as yet only on the threshold of the world. Lucretia therefore received the suggestions and proposals of Madame Colonna with great coldness and indifference; one might even say contempt, for she neither felt respect for this lady, nor was she sedulous to evince it. Although really younger than Coningsby, Lucretia felt that a woman of eighteen is in all worldly considerations, ten years older than a youth of the same age. She anticipated that a considerable time might elapse before Coningsby would feel it necessary to seal his destiny by marriage, while on the other hand, she was not only anxious, but resolved, not to delay on her part her emancipation from the galling position in which she very frequently found herself.

Lucretia felt rather than expressed these ideas

and impressions. She was not naturally communicative, and conversed with no one with less frankness and facility than with her step-mother. Madame Colonna therefore found no reasons in her conversation with Lucretia to change her determination. As her mind was not very ingenious she did not see questions in those various lights which make us at the same time infirm of purpose and tolerant. What she fancied ought to be done, she fancied must be done; for she perceived no middle course or alternative. For the rest, Lucretia's carriage towards her gave her little discomfort. Besides she herself though good-natured, was obstinate. Her feelings were not very acute; nothing much vexed her. As long as she had fine dresses, good dinners, and opera boxes, she could bear her plans to be crossed like a philosopher; and her consolation under her unaccomplished devices was her admirable consistency, which always assured her that her projects were wise, though unfulfilled.

She broke her purpose to Mr. Rigby that she might gain not only his adhesion to her views,

but his assistance in achieving them. As Madame Colonna in Mr. Rigby's estimation exercised more influence over Lord Monmouth than any other individual, faithful to his policy or practice, he agreed with all Madame Colonna's plans and wishes, and volunteered instantly to further them. As for the Prince, his wife never consulted him on any subject, nor did he wish to be consulted. On the contrary, he had no opinion about anything. All that he required was that he should be surrounded by what contributed to his personal enjoyment, that he should never be troubled, and that he should have billiards. He was not inexpert in field-sports, rode indeed very well for an Italian, but he never cared to be out of doors; and there was only one room in the interior which passionately interested him. It was where the echoing balls denoted the sweeping hazard or the effective cannonade. That was the chamber where the Prince Colonna literally existed. Half an hour after breakfast he was in the billiard room; he never quitted it until he dressed for dinner; and he generally contrived, while the

world were amused or amusing themselves at the comedy or in the dance, to steal down with some congenial sprites to the magical and illumined chamber, and use his cue until bed-time.

Faithful to her first impressions, Lucretia had made no difference in her demeanour to Coningsby to that which she offered to the other guests. Polite, but uncommunicative; ready to answer, but never originating conversation; she charmed him as little by her manner as by her person; and after some attempts not very painstaking to interest her, Coningsby had ceased to address her. The day passed by with only a faint recognition between them; even that sometimes omitted.

When however Lucretia observed that Coningsby had become one of the most notable persons in the castle; when she heard everywhere of his talents and accomplishments, his beauty and grace and great acquirements, and perceived that he was courted by all; that Lord Monmouth omitted no occasion publicly to evince towards him his regard and consideration:

that he seemed generally looked upon in the light of his grandfather's heir, and that Lady St. Julians, more learned in that respect than any lady in the kingdom, was heard more than once to regret that she had not brought another daughter with her, Clara Isabella as well as Augustina; the Princess Lucretia began to imagine that Madame Colonna after all, might not be so extravagant in her purpose, as she had first supposed. She therefore surprised Coningsby with the almost affectionate moroseness with which, while she hated to sing, she yet found pleasure in singing for him alone. And it is impossible to say what might not have been the next move in her tactics in this respect, had not the very night on which she had resolved to commence the enchantment of Coningsby, introduced to her Sidonia.

The Princess Lucretia met her fate as she encountered the dark still glance of the friend of Lord Eskdale. He too beheld a woman unlike other women, and with his fine experience both as a man and a physiologist felt that he was in the presence of no ordinary organization.

From the evening of his introduction, Sidonia sought the society of the Princess Lucretia. He could not complain of her reserve. She threw out her mind in various and highly cultivated intelligence. He recognised in her a deep and subtile spirit, considerable reading for a woman, habits of thought, and a soul passionate and daring. She resolved to subdue one whose appreciation she had gained, and who had subdued her. The profound meaning and the calm manner of Sidonia combined to quell her spirit. She struggled against the spell. She tried to rival his power; to cope with him, and with the same weapons. But prompt as was her thought and bright as was its expression, her heart beat in tumult; and with all her apparent serenity, her agitated soul was the prey of absorbing passion. She could not contend with that intelligent, yet inscrutable, eye; with that manner so full of interest and respect, and yet so tranquil. Besides they were not on equal terms. Here was a girl contending with a man learned in the world's way.

Between Sidonia and Coningsby there at

once occurred companionship. The morning after his arrival they went out shooting together. After a long ramble they would stretch themselves on the turf under a shady tree, often by the side of some brook where the cresses grow, that added a luxury to their sporting meal, and then Coningsby would lead their conversation to some subject on which Sidonia would pour out his mind with all that depth of reflection, variety of knowledge, and richness of illustrative memory, which distinguished him; and which offered so striking a contrast to the sharp talent, the shallow information, and the worldly cunning that make a Rigby.

This fellowship between Sidonia and Coningsby elevated the latter still more in the estimation of Lucretia, and rendered her still more desirous of gaining his good will and opinion. A great friendship seemed to have arisen between them, and the world began to believe that there must be some foundations for Madame Colonna's inuendoes. That lady herself was not in the least alarmed by the attention which Sidonia paid her step-daughter. It was of

course well-known that Sidonia was not a marrying man. He was however a great friend of Mr. Coningsby, his presence and society brought Coningsby and Lucretia more together; and however flattered her daughter might be for the moment by Sidonia's homage, still as she would ultimately find out, if indeed she ever cared so to do, that Sidonia could only be her admirer, Madame Colonna had no kind of doubt, that ultimately Coningsby would be Lucretia's husband, as she had arranged from the first.

The Princess Lucretia was a fine horsewoman, though she rarely joined the various riding-parties that were daily formed at the Castle. Often indeed, attended only by her groom, she met the equestrians. Now she would ride with Sidonia and Coningsby, and as a female companion was indispensable, she insisted upon "La Petite" accompanying her. This was a fearful trial for Flora, but she encountered it, encouraged by the kind solicitude of Coningsby, who always seemed her friend.

Very shortly after the arrival of Sidonia, the

Archduke and his suite quitted the Castle, which had been His Highness's head-quarters during his visit to the manufacturing districts; but no other great change in the assembled company occurred for some little time.

CHAPTER XIII.

"You will observe one curious trait," said Sidonia to Coningsby, "in the history of this country; the depositary of power is always unpopular, all combine against it, always it falls. Power was deposited in the great Barons; the Church using the King for its instrument crushed the great Barons. Power was deposited in the Church; the King bribing the Parliament plundered the Church. Power was deposited in the King; the Parliament using the People beheaded the King, expelled the King, changed the King, and finally, for a King substituted an administrative officer. For

one hundred and fifty years Power has been deposited in the Parliament, and for the last sixty or seventy years it has been becoming more and more unpopular. In 1830 it was endeavoured by a reconstruction to regain the popular affection; but in truth, as the Parliament then only made itself more powerful, it has only become more odious. As we see that the Barons, the Church, the King, have in turn devoured each other, and that the Parliament, the last devourer, remains, it is impossible to resist the impression that this body also is doomed to be destroyed, and he is a sagacious statesman who may detect in what form and in what quarter the great consumer will arise."

"You take then a dark view of our position?"

"Troubled not dark. I do not ascribe to political institutions that paramount influence which it is the feeling of this age to attribute to them. The Senate that confronted Brennus in the Forum was the same body that registered in an after age the ribald decrees of a Nero. Trial by jury, for example, is looked upon by

all as the Palladium of our liberties; yet a jury at a very recent period of our own history, the reign of Charles II. was a tribunal as iniquitous as the Inquisition." And a graver expression stole over the countenance of Sidonia as he remembered what that Inquisition had operated on his own race and his own destiny. "There are families in this country," he continued, "of both the great historical parties, that in the persecution of their houses, the murder and proscription of some of their most illustrious members, found judges as unjust and relentless in an open jury of their countrymen, as we did in the conclaves of Madrid and Seville."

"Where then would you look for hope?"

"In what is more powerful than laws and institutions, and without which the best laws and the most skilful institutions may be a dead letter, or the very means of tyranny; in the national character. It is not in the increased feebleness of its institutions that I see the peril of England; it is in the decline of its character as a community."

"And yet you could scarcely describe this as an age of corruption?"

"Not of political corruption. But it is an age of social disorganisation, far more dangerous in its consequences, because far more extensive. You may have a corrupt government and a pure community; you may have a corrupt community and a pure administration. Which would you elect?"

"Neither," said Coningsby; "I wish to see a people full of faith, and a government full of duty."

"Rely upon it," said Sidonia, "that England should think more of the community and less of the government."

"But tell me, what do you understand by the term national character?"

"A character is an assemblage of qualities; the character of England should be an assemblage of great qualities."

"But we cannot deny that the English have great virtues."

"The civilisation of a thousand years must produce great virtues: but we are speaking

of the decline of public virtue, not its existence."

"In what then do you trace that decline?"

"In the fact that the various classes of this country are arrayed against each other."

"But to what do you attribute those reciprocal hostilities?"

"Not entirely, not even principally, to those economical causes of which we hear so much. I look upon all such as secondary causes which in a certain degree must always exist; which obtrude themselves in troubled times; and which at all times it is the business of wise statesmen to watch, to regulate, to ameliorate, to modify."

"I am speaking to elicit truth, not to maintain opinions," said Coningsby; "for I have none," he added mournfully.

"I think," said Sidonia, "that there is no error so vulgar as to believe that revolutions are occasioned by economical causes. They come in, doubtless, very often to precipitate a catastrophe; very rarely do they occasion one. I know no period, for example, when physical comfort was more diffused in England than in

1640. England had a moderate population, a very improved agriculture, a rich commerce; yet she was on the eve of the greatest and most violent changes that she has as yet experienced."

"That was a religious movement."

"Admit it; the cause then was not physical. The imagination of England rose against the government. It proves then that when that faculty is astir in a nation, it will sacrifice even physical comfort to follow its impulses."

"Do you think then there is a wild desire for extensive political change in the country?"

"Hardly that: England is perplexed at the present moment, not inventive. That will be the next phasis in her moral state, and to that I wish to draw your thoughts. For myself while I ascribe little influence to physical causes for the production of this perplexity, I am still less of opinion that it can be removed by any new disposition of political power. It would only aggravate the evil. That would be recurring to the old error of supposing you can necessarily find national content in political

institutions. A political institution is a machine; the motive power is the national character. With that it rests, whether the machine will benefit society, or destroy it. Society in this country is perplexed, almost paralyzed; in time it will move, and it will devise. How are the elements of the nation to be blended again together? In what spirit is that reorganization to take place?"

"To know that would be to know every thing."

"At least let us free ourselves from the double ignorance of the Platonists. Let us not be ignorant that we are ignorant."

"I have emancipated myself from that darkness for a long time," said Coningsby. "Long has my mind been musing over these thoughts, but to me all is still obscurity."

"In this country," said Sidonia, "since the peace, there has been an attempt to advocate a reconstruction of society on a purely rational basis. The principle of Utility has been powerfully developed. I speak not with lightness of the labours of the disciples of that school. I

bow to intellect in every form: and we should be grateful to any school of philosophers even if we disagree with them; doubly grateful in this country, where for so long a period our statesmen were in so pitiable an arrear of public intelligence. There has been an attempt to reconstruct society on a basis of material motives and calculations. It has failed. It must ultimately have failed under any circumstances; its failure in an ancient and densely peopled kingdom was inevitable. How limited is human reason, the profoundest inquirers are most conscious. We are not indebted to the Reason of man for any of the great achievements which are the landmarks of human action and human progress. It was not Reason that besieged Troy; it was not Reason that sent forth the Saracen from the Desart to conquer the world; that inspired the Crusades; that instituted the Monastic orders; it was not Reason that produced the Jesuits; above all, it was not Reason that created the French Revolution. Man is only truly great when he acts from the passions; never irresistible but when he appeals

to the Imagination. Even Mormon counts more votaries than Bentham."

"And you think then that as Imagination once subdued the State, Imagination may now save it?"

"Man is made to adore and to obey: but if you will not command him; if you give him nothing to worship; he will fashion his own divinities, and find a chieftain in his own passions."

"But where can we find faith in a nation of sectaries? Who can feel loyalty to a Sovereign of Downing Street?"

"I speak of the eternal principles of human nature; you answer me with the passing accidents of the hour. Sects rise and sects disappear. Where are the Fifth-Monarchy men? England is governed by Downing Street; once it was governed by Alfred and Elizabeth."

CHAPTER XIV.

About this time a steeple-chase in the West of England had attracted considerable attention. This sport was then of recent introduction in England, and is in fact an importation of Irish growth, although it has flourished in our soil. A young guardsman who was then a guest at the Castle, and who had been in garrison in Ireland, had some experience of this pastime in the Kildare country, and he proposed that they should have a steeple chase at Coningsby. This was a suggestion very agreeable to the Marquess of Beaumanoir celebrated for his feats of horsemanship, and indeed to most

of the guests. It was agreed that the race should come off at once, before any of the present company, many of whom gave symptoms of being on the wing, had quitted the Castle. The young guardsman and Mr. Guy Flouncey had surveyed the country, and had selected a line which they esteemed very appropriate for the scene of action. From a hill of common land you looked down upon the valley of Coningsby richly cultivated; deeply ditched and stiffly fenced; the valley was bounded by another rising ground, and the scene was admirably calculated to give an extensive view to a multitude.

The distance along the valley was to be two miles out, and home again; the starting post being also the winning post, and the flags which were placed on every fence that the horses were to pass, were to be passed on the left hand of the rider both going and coming; so that although the horses had to leap the same fences forward and backward, they could not come over the same place twice. In the last field before they turned, was a brook seventeen feet clear from side

to side, with good taking off on both banks. Here real business commenced.

Lord Monmouth highly approved the scheme, but mentioned that the stakes must be moderate and open to the whole county. The neighbourhood had a week of preparation, and the entries for the Coningsby steeple-chase were numerous. Lord Monmouth after a reserve for his own account placed his stable at the service of his guests. For himself he offered to back his horse, Sir Robert, which was to be ridden by his grandson.

Now nothing was spoken or thought of at Coningsby Castle except the coming sport. The ladies shared the general excitement. They embroidered handkerchiefs, and scarfs, and gloves, with the respective colours of the rivals, and tried to make jockey-caps. Lady St. Julians postponed her intended departure in consequence. Madame Colonna wished that some means could be contrived by which they might all win.

Sidonia with the other competitors had ridden over the ground and glanced at the brook

with the eye of a workman. On his return to the Castle he sent a despatch for some of his stud.

Coningsby was all anxiety to win. He was proud of the confidence of his grandfather in backing him. He had a powerful horse and a first-rate fencer, and he was resolved himself not to flinch. On the night before the race retiring somewhat earlier than usual to his chamber, he observed on his dressing-table a small packet addressed to his name, and in an unknown handwriting. Opening it he found a very pretty racing jacket embroidered with his colours of pink and white. This was a perplexing circumstance, but he fancied it on the whole a happy omen. And who was the donor? Certainly not the Princess Lucretia, for he had observed her fashioning some maroon ribands which were the colours of Sidonia. It could scarcely be from Mrs. Guy Flouncey. Perhaps Madame Colonna to please—the Marquess? Thinking over this incident he fell asleep.

The morning before the race Sidonia's horses arrived. All went to examine them at the stables.

Among them was an Arab mare. Coningsby recognised the Daughter of the Star. She was greatly admired for her points; but Guy Flouncey whispered to Mr. Melton that she never could do the work.

"But Lord Beaumanoir says he is all for speed against strength in these affairs," said Mr. Melton.

Guy Flouncey smiled incredulously.

The night before the race it rained heavily.

"I take it the country will not be very like the desarts of Arabia," said Mr. Guy Flouncey with a knowing look to Mr. Melton, who was noting a bet in his memorandum book.

The morning was very fine, clear and sunny, with a soft western breeze. The starting post was about three miles from the Castle; but long before the hour, the surrounding hills were covered with people; squire and farmer; with no lack of their wives and daughters; many a hind in his smock-frock, and many an "operative" from the neighbouring factories. The "gentlemen riders" gradually arrived. The

entries were very numerous, though it was understood that not more than a dozen would come to the post, and half of these were the guests of Lord Monmouth. At half-past one the cortège from the Castle arrived, and took up the post which had been prepared for them on the summit of the hill. Lord Monmouth was very much cheered on his arrival. In the carriage with him were Madame Colonna and Lady St. Julians. The Princess Lucretia, Lady Gaythorpe, Mrs. Guy Flouncey, accompanied by Lord Eskdale and other cavaliers, formed a brilliant company. There was scarcely a domestic in the Castle who was not there. The comedians indeed did not care to come, but Villebecque prevailed upon Flora to drive with him to the race in a buggy he borrowed of the steward.

The start was to be at two o'clock. The "gentlemen jockeys" are mustered. Never were riders mounted and appointed in better style. The stewards and the clerk of the course attend them to the starting-post. There they are now assembled. Guy Flouncey takes up his stirrup-leathers a hole; Mr. Melton looks at

his girths. In a few moments, the irrevocable monosyllable will be uttered.

The bugle sounds for them to face about: the Clerk of the Course sings out: "Gentlemen, are you all ready?" No objection made, the word given to go, and fifteen riders start in excellent style.

Prince Colonna, who rode like Prince Rupert, took the lead, followed close by a stout yeoman on an old white horse of great provincial celebrity, who made steady running, and from his appearance and action, an awkward customer. The rest, with two exceptions, followed in a cluster at no great distance, and in this order they continued with very slight variation for the first two miles, though there were several ox fences, and one or two of them remarkably stiff. Indeed they appeared more like horses running over a course than over a country. The two exceptions were Lord Beaumanoir on his horse Sunbeam and Sidonia on the Arab. These kept somewhat slightly in the rear.

Almost in this wise they approached the dreaded brook. Indeed with the exception of

the last two riders who were about thirty yards behind, it seemed that you might have covered the rest of the field with a sheet. They arrived at the brook at the same moment: seventeen feet of water between strong sound banks is no holiday work; but they charged with unfaltering intrepidity. But what a revolution in their spirited order did that instant produce! A masked battery of cannister and grape could not have achieved more terrible execution. Coningsby alone clearly lighted on the opposing bank; but for the rest of them, it seemed for a moment, that they were all in the middle of the brook, one over another, splashing, kicking, swearing; every one trying to get out and keep others in. Mr. Melton and the stout yeoman regained their saddles and were soon again in chace. The Prince lost his horse, and was not alone in his misfortune. Mr. Guy Flouncey lay on his back with a horse across his diaphragm; only his head above the water, and his mouth full of chick-weed and dock leaves. And if help had not been at hand, he and several others might have remained struggling in their watery

bed for a considerable period. In the midst of this turmoil, the Marquess and Sidonia at the same moment cleared the brook.

Affairs now became very interesting. Here Coningsby took up the running, Sidonia and the Marquess laying close at his quarters. Mr. Melton had gone the wrong side of a flag, and the stout yeoman, though close at hand, was already trusting much to his spurs. In the extreme distance might be detected three or four stragglers. Thus they continued until within three fields of home. A ploughed field finished the old white horse; the yeoman stuck his spurs to the rowels, but the only effect of the experiment was, that the horse stood stock still. Coningsby, Sidonia, and the Marquess were now altogether. The winning post is in sight, and a high and strong gate leads to the last field. Coningsby looking like a winner gallantly dashed forward and sent Sir Robert at the gate, but he had over-estimated his horse's powers at this point of the game, and a rattling fall was the consequence: however, horse and rider were both on the right side, and Coningsby was

in his saddle and at work again in a moment. It seemed that the Marquess was winning. There was only one more fence; and that the foot people had made a breach in by the side of a gate post and wide enough, as was said, for a broad wheel waggon to travel by. Instead of passing straight over this gap, Sunbeam swerved against the gate and threw his rider. This was decisive. The Daughter of the Star, who was still going beautifully, pulling double, and her jockey sitting still, sprang over the gap and went in first, Coningsby on Sir Robert being placed second. The distance measured was about four miles; there were thirty-nine leaps and it was done under fifteen minutes.

Lord Monmouth was well contcnt with the prowess of his grandson, and his extreme cordiality consoled Coningsby under a defeat, which was very vexatious. It was some alleviation that he was beaten by Sidonia. Madame Colonna even shed tears at her young friend's disappointment, and mourned it especially for Lucretia, who had said nothing, though a flush

might be observed on her usually pale countenance. Villebecque who had betted was so extremely excited by the whole affair, especially during the last three minutes, that he quite forgot his quiet companion, and when he looked round he found Flora fainting.

"You rode well," said Sidonia to Coningsby; "but your horse was more strong than swift. After all this thing is a race; and notwithstanding Solomon, in a race speed must win."

CHAPTER XV.

NOTWITHSTANDING the fatigues of the morning, the evening was past with great gaiety at the castle. The gentlemen all vowed, that far from being inconvenienced by their mishaps, they felt, on the whole, rather better for them. Mr. Guy Flouncey indeed did not seem quite so limber and flexible as usual; and the young guardsman, who had previously discoursed in an almost alarming style of the perils and feats of the Kildare country, had subsided into a remarkable reserve. The Provincials were delighted with Sidonia's riding, and even the Leicestershire gentlemen almost admitted, that he was a "customer."

Lord Monmouth beckoned to Coningsby to

sit by him on the sofa, and spoke of his approaching University life. He gave his grandson a great deal of good advice: told him to avoid drinking, especially if he ever chanced to play cards, which he hoped he never would; urged the expediency of never borrowing money, and of confining his loans to small sums and then only to friends of whom he wished to get rid; most particularly impressed on him never to permit his feelings to be engaged by any woman; nobody, he assured Coningsby, despised that weakness more than women themselves. Indeed feeling of any kind did not suit the present age—it was not bon ton; and in some degree always made a man ridiculous. Coningsby was always to have before him the possible catastrophe of becoming ridiculous. It was the test of conduct, Lord Monmouth said; a fear of becoming ridiculous is the best guide in life, and will save a man from all sorts of scrapes. For the rest, Coningsby was to appear at Cambridge as became Lord Monmouth's favourite grandson. His grandfather had opened an account for him with Drummonds on whom he was to draw for his very considerable allowance; and

if by any chance he found himself in a scrape, no matter of what kind, he was to be sure to write to his grandfather, who would certainly get him out of it.

"Your departure is sudden," said the Princess Lucretia in a low deep tone to Sidonia who was sitting by her side and screened from general observation by the waltzers who whirled by.

"Departures should be sudden."

"I do not like departures," said the Princess.

"Nor did the Queen of Sheba when she quitted Solomon. You know what she did?"

"Tell me."

"She wept very much, and let one of the King's birds fly into the garden. 'You are freed from your cage,' she said; 'but I am going back to mine.'"

"But you never weep," said the Princess.

"Never."

"And are always free?"

"So are men in the Desart."

"But your life is not a Desart."

"It at least resembles the Desart in one respect—it is useless."

"The only useless life is woman's."

"Yet there have been heroines," said Sidonia.

"The Queen of Sheba," said the Princess smiling.

"A favourite of mine," said Sidonia.

"And why was she a favourite of yours?" rather eagerly inquired Lucretia.

"Because she thought deeply, talked finely, and moved gracefully."

"And yet might be a very unfeeling dame at the same time," said the Princess.

"I never thought of that," said Sidonia.

"The heart apparently does not reckon in your philosophy."

"What we call the heart," said Sidonia, "is a nervous sensation like shyness which gradually disappears in society. It is fervent in the nursery, strong in the domestic circle, tumultuous at school. The affections are the children of ignorance; when the horizon of our experience expands, and models multiply, love and admiration imperceptibly vanish."

"I fear the horizon of your experience has

very greatly expanded. With your opinions, what charm can there be in life?"

"The sense of existence."

"So Sidonia is off to-morrow, Monmouth," said Lord Eskdale.

"Hah!" said the Marquess. "I must get him to breakfast with me before he goes."

The party broke up. Coningsby who had heard Lord Eskdale announce Sidonia's departure lingered to express his regret and say, farewell.

"I cannot sleep," said Sidonia; "and I never smoke in Europe. If you are not stiff with your wounds, come to my rooms."

This invitation was very willingly accepted.

"I am going to Cambridge in a week," said Coningsby. "I was almost in hopes you might have remained as long."

"I also; but my letters of this morning demand me. If it had not been for our chase, I should have quitted immediately. The minister cannot pay the interest on the national debt—not an unprecedented circumstance, and has applied to us. I never permit any business

of state to be transacted without my personal interposition; and so I must go up to town immediately."

"Suppose you don't pay it," said Coningsby, smiling.

"If I followed my own impulse, I would remain here," said Sidonia. "Can anything be more absurd than that a nation should apply to an individual to maintain its credit, and with its credit, its existence as an empire and its comfort as a people; and that individual one to whom its laws deny the proudest rights of citizenship, the privilege of sitting in its senate and of holding land; for though I have been rash enough to buy several estates, my own opinion is that by the existing law of England, an Englishman of Hebrew faith cannot possess the soil."

"But surely it would be easy to repeal a law so illiberal—"

"Oh! as for illiberality I have no objection to it if it be an element of power. Eschew political sentimentalism. What I contend is that if you permit men to accumulate property,

and they use that permission to a great extent, power is inseparable from that property, and it is in the last degree impolitic to make it the interest of any powerful class to oppose the institutions under which they live. The Jews, for example, independent of the capital qualities for citizenship which they possess in their industry, temperance, and energy and vivacity of mind, are a race essentially monarchical, deeply religious, and shrinking themselves from converts as from a calamity, are ever anxious to see the religious systems of the countries in which they live, flourish; yet since your society has become agitated in England and powerful combinations menace your institutions, you find the once loyal Hebrew invariably arrayed in the same ranks as the leveller and the latitudinarian, and prepared to support the policy which may even endanger his life and property, rather than tamely continue under a system which seeks to degrade him. The Tories lose an important election at a critical moment; 'tis the Jews come forward to vote against them. The Church is alarmed at the scheme of a lati-

tudinarian university, and learns with relief that funds are not forthcoming for its establishment; a Jew immediately advances and endows it. Yet thc Jews, Coningsby, are essentially Tories. Toryism indeed is but copied from the mighty prototype which has fashioned Europe. And every generation they must become more powerful and more dangerous to the society which is hostile to them. Do you think that the quiet humdrum persecution of a decorous representative of an English university can crush those who have successively baffled the Pharoahs, Nebuchadnezzar, Rome, and the Feudal ages? The fact is you cannot destroy a pure race of the Caucasian organization. It is a physiological fact; a simple law of nature, which has baffled Egyptian and Assyrian Kings, Roman Emperors, and Christian Inquisitors. No penal laws, no physical tortures, can effect that a superior race should be absorbed in an inferior, or be destroyed by it. The mixed persecuting races disappear; the pure persecuted race remains. And at this moment, in spite of centuries, of tens of centuries, of degradation, the Jewish

mind exercises a vast influence on the affairs of Europe. I speak not of their laws, which you still obey; of their literature, with which your minds are saturated; but of the living Hebrew intellect.

"You never observe a great intellectual movement in Europe in which the Jews do not greatly participate. The first Jesuits were Jews: that mysterious Russian Diplomacy which so alarms Western Europe is organized and principally carried on by Jews; that mighty revolution which is at this moment preparing in Germany, and which will be in fact a second and greater Reformation, and of which so little is as yet known in England, is entirely developing under the auspices of Jews, who almost monopolise the professorial chairs of Germany. Neander, the founder of Spiritual Christianity, and who is Regius Professor of Divinity in the University of Berlin, is a Jew. Benary, equally famous, and in the same University, is a Jew. Wehl, the Arabic Professor of Heidelberg, is a Jew. Years ago, when I was in Palestine, I met a German student who was accumulating

materials for the History of Christianity, and studying the genius of the place; a modest and learned man. It was Wehl; then unknown, since become the first Arabic scholar of the day, and the author of the life of Mahomet. But for the German professors of this race, their name is Legion. I think there are more than ten at Berlin alone.

"I told you just now that I was going up to town to-morrow, because I always made it a rule to interpose when affairs of State were on the carpet. Otherwise, I never interfere. I hear of peace and war in newspapers, but I am never alarmed, except when I am informed that the Sovereigns want treasure; then I know that monarchs are serious.

"A few years back we were applied to by Russia. Now there has been no friendship between the Court of St. Petersburgh and my family. It has Dutch connexions which have generally supplied it, and our representations in favour of the Polish Hebrews, a numerous race, but the most suffering and degraded of all the tribes, has not been very agreeable to the

Czar. However circumstances drew to an approximation between the Romanoffs and the Sidonias. I resolved to go myself to St. Petersburgh. I had on my arrival an interview with the Russian Minister of Finance, Count Cancrin; I beheld the son of a Lithuanian Jew. The loan was connected with the affairs of Spain; I resolved on repairing to Spain from Russia. I travelled without intermission. I had an audience immediately on my arrival with the Spanish Minister, Senor Mendizabel; I beheld one like myself, the son of a Nuovo Christiano, a Jew of Arragon. In consequence of what transpired at Madrid, I went straight to Paris to consult the President of the French Council; I beheld the son of a French Jew, a hero, an imperial marshal, and very properly so, for who should be military heroes if not those who worship the Lord of Hosts?"

"And is Soult a Hebrew!"

"Yes, and others of the French Marshals, and the most famous; Massena for example; his real name was Manasseh: but to my anecdote. The

consequence of our consultations was that some Northern power should be applied to in a friendly and mediative capacity. We fixed on Prussia, and the President of the Council made an application to the Prussian Minister, who attended a few days after our conference. Count Arnim entered the cabinet, and I beheld a Prussian Jew. So you see, my dear Coningsby, that the world is governed by very different personages to what is imagined by those who are not behind the scenes."

"You startle, and deeply interest me."

"You must study physiology, my dear child. Pure races of Caucasus may be persecuted, but they cannot be despised, except by the brutal ignorance of some mongrel breed, that brandishes faggots and howls exterminations, but is itself exterminated without persecutions by that irresistible law of nature which is fatal to curs."

"But I come also from Caucasus," said Coningsby.

"Verily; and thank your Creator for such a destiny: and your race is sufficiently pure.

You come from the shores of the Northern Sea, land of the blue eye, and the golden hair, and the frank brow; 'tis a famous breed, with whom we Arabs have contended long; from whom we have much suffered; but these Goths, and Saxons, and Normans, were doubtless great men."

"But so favoured by Nature, why has not your race produced great poets, great orators, great writers?"

"Favoured by Nature and by Nature's God we produced the lyre of David; we gave you Isaiah and Ezekiel; they are our Olynthians, our Phillippics. Favoured by Nature we still remain: but in exact proportion as we have been favoured by Nature we have been persecuted by Man. After a thousand struggles; after acts of heroic courage that Rome has never equalled; deeds of divine patriotism that Athens, and Sparta, and Carthage have never excelled; we have endured fifteen hundred years of supernatural slavery, during which, every device that can degrade or destroy man has been the destiny that we have sustained and baffled.

The Hebrew child has entered adolescence only to learn that he was the Pariah of that ungrateful Europe that owes to him the best part of its laws, a fine portion of its literature, all its religion. Great poets require a public; we have been content with the immortal melodies that we sung more than two thousand years ago by the waters of Babylon and wept. They record our triumphs; they solace our affliction. Great orators are the creatures of popular assemblies; we were permitted only by stealth to meet even in our temples. And as for great writers the catalogue is not blank. What are all the school-men, Aquinas himself, to Maimonides; and as for modern philosophy, all springs from Spinoza.

"But the passionate and creative genius that is the nearest link to divinity, and which no human tyranny can destroy, though it can divert it; that should have stirred the hearts of nations by its inspired sympathy, or governed senates by its burning eloquence, has found a medium for its expression, to which, in spite of your prejudices and your evil passions, you have

been obliged to bow. The ear, the voice, the fancy teeming with combinations, the imagination fervent with picture and emotion, that came from Caucasus and which we have preserved unpolluted, have endowed us with almost the exclusive privilege of MUSIC; that science of harmonious sounds which the ancients recognised as most divine, and deified in the person of their most beautiful creation. I speak not of the past, though were I to enter into the history of the lords of melody, you would find it the annals of Hebrew genius. But at this moment even, musical Europe is ours. There is not a company of singers, not an orchestra in a single capital, that are not crowded with our children under the feigned names which they adopt to conciliate the dark aversion which your posterity will some day disclaim with shame and disgust. Almost every great composer, skilled musician, almost every voice that ravishes you with its transporting strains, spring from our tribes. The catalogue is too vast to enumerate; too illustrious to dwell for a moment on secondary names, however eminent. Enough for us that

the three great creative minds to whose exquisite inventions all nations at this moment yield; Rossini, Meyerbeer, Mendelsohn; are of Hebrew race: and little do your men of fashion, your 'muscadins' of Paris and your dandies of London, as they thrill into raptures at the notes of a Pasta or a Grisi, little do they suspect that they are offering their homage to the sweet singers of Israel!"

CHAPTER XVI.

It was the noon of the day on which Sidonia was to leave the Castle. The wind was high; the vast white clouds scudded over the blue heaven; the leaves yet green, and tender branches snapped like glass, were whirled in eddies from the trees; the grassy sward undulated like the ocean with a thousand tints and shadows. From the window of the music-room Lucretia Colonna gazed on the turbulent sky.

The heaven of her heart too was disturbed.

She turned from the agitated external world to ponder over her inward emotion. She uttered a deep sigh.

Slowly she moved towards her harp; wildly, almost unconsciously, she touched with one hand its strings, while her eyes were fixed on the ground. An imperfect melody resounded; yet plaintive and passionate. It seemed to attract her soul. She raised her head, and then touching the strings with both her hands, she poured forth tones of deep, yet thrilling power.

"I am a stranger in the halls of a stranger! Ah! whither shall I flee?

"To the castle of my fathers in the green mountains; to the palace of my fathers in the ancient city?

"There is no flag on the castle of my fathers in the green mountains; silent is the palace of my fathers in the ancient city.

"Is there no home for the homeless; can the unloved never find love?

"Ah! thou fliest away fleet cloud:—he will leave us swifter than thee! Alas! cutting wind, thy breath is not as cold as his heart!

"I am a stranger in the halls of the stranger! Ah! whither shall I flee?"

The door of the music room slowly opened. It was Sidonia. His hat was in his hand; he was evidently on the point of departure.

"Those sounds assured me," he said very calmly, but kindly, as he advanced, "that I might find you here, on which I scarcely counted, at so early an hour."

"You are going then?" said the Princess.

"My carriage is at the door; the Marquess has delayed me; I must be in London to-night. I conclude more abruptly than I could have wished one of the most agreeable visits I ever made; and I hope you will permit me to express to you how much I am indebted to you for a society which those should deem themselves fortunate, who can more frequently enjoy."

He held forth his hand; she extended hers, cold as marble, which he bent over, but did not press to his lips.

"Lord Monmouth talks of remaining here some time," he observed; "but I suppose next year, if not this, we shall all meet in some city of the earth."

Lucretia bowed, and Sidonia with a graceful reverence withdrew.

The Princess Lucretia stood for some mo-

ments motionless; a sound attracted her to the window; she perceived the equipage of Sidonia whirling along the winding roads of the park. She watched it till it disappeared; then quitting the window, she threw herself into a chair and buried her face in her shawl.

END OF BOOK IV.

BOOK V.

CHAPTER I.

An University life did not bring to Coningsby that feeling of emancipation usually experienced by freshmen. The contrast between school and college life is perhaps under any circumstances less striking to the Etonian than to others: he has been prepared for becoming his own master by the liberty so wisely entrusted to him in his boyhood, and which is in general so discreetly exercised. But there were also other reasons why Coningsby should have been less impressed with the novelty of his life, and have

encountered less temptations than commonly are met with in the new existence which an University opens to youth. In the interval, which had elapsed between quitting Eton and going to Cambridge, brief as the period may comparatively appear, Coningsby had seen much of the world. Three or four months indeed may not seem, at the first blush, a course of time which can very materially influence the formation of character; but time must not be counted by calendars, but by sensations, by thought. Coningsby had felt a good deal, reflected more. He had encountered a great number of human beings, offering a vast variety of character for his observation. It was not merely manners, but even the intellectual and moral development of the human mind, which in a great degree unconsciously to himself had been submitted to his study and his scrutiny. New trains of ideas had been opened to him; his mind was teeming with suggestions. The horizon of his intelligence had insensibly expanded. He perceived that there were other opinions in the world besides those to which he had been

habituated. The depths of his intellect had been stirred. He was a wiser man.

He distinguished three individuals whose acquaintance had greatly influenced his mind; Eustace Lyle, the elder Millbank, above all, Sidonia. He curiously meditated over the fact, that three English subjects, one of them a principal landed proprietor, another one of the most eminent manufacturers, and the third the greatest capitalist in the kingdom, all of them men of great intelligence, and doubtless of a high probity and conscience, were in their hearts, disaffected with the political constitution of the country. Yet unquestionably these were the men among whom we ought to seek for some of our first citizens. What then was this repulsive quality in those institutions which we persisted in calling national, and which once were so? Here was a great question.

There was another reason also, why Coningsby should feel a little fastidious among his new habits, and without being aware of it, a little depressed. For three or four months, and for the first time in his life, he had passed

his time in the continual society of refined and charming women. It is an acquaintance which when habitual exercises a great influence over the tone of the mind, even if it does not produce any more violent effects. It refines the taste, quickens the perception, and gives, as it were, a grace and flexibility to the intellect. Coningsby in his solitary rooms arranging his books, sighed when he recalled the Lady Everinghams and the Lady Theresas; the gracious Duchess; the frank, good-tempered Madame Colonna; that deeply interesting enigma, the Princess Lucretia; and the gentle Flora. He thought with disgust of the impending dissipation of an University, which could only be an exaggeration of their coarse frolics at school. It seemed rather vapid this mighty Cambridge over which they had so often talked in the playing fields of Eton with such anticipations of its vast and absorbing interest. And those University honours that once were the great object of his aspirations, they did not figure in that grandeur with which they once haunted his imagination.

What Coningsby determined to conquer was knowledge. He had watched the influence of Sidonia in society with an eye of unceasing vigilance. Coningsby perceived that all yielded to him; that Lord Monmouth even, who seemed to respect none, gave place to his intelligence; appealed to him, listened to him, was guided by him. What was the secret of this influence? Knowledge. On all subjects his views were prompt and clear, and this not more from his native sagacity and reach of view, than from the aggregate of facts which rose to guide his judgment, and illustrate his meaning from all countries and all ages instantly at his command.

The friends of Coningsby were now hourly arriving. It seemed when he met them again, that they had all suddenly become men since they had separated; Buckhurst especially. He had been at Paris, and returned with his mind very much opened, and trowsers made quite in a new style. All his thoughts were how soon he could contrive to get back again; and he told them endless stories of actresses and

dinners at fashionable cafés. Vere enjoyed Cambridge most, because he had been staying with his family since he quitted Eton. Henry Sydney was full of church architecture, national sports, restoration of the order of the Peasantry, and was to maintain a constant correspondence on these and similar subjects with Eustace Lyle. Finally however they all fell into a very fair, regular, routine life. They all read a little, but not with the enthusiasm which they had once projected. Buckhurst drove four-in-hand, and they all of them sometimes assisted him; but not immoderately. Their suppers were sometimes gay, but never outrageous; and among all of them, the school friendship was maintained unbroken, and even undisturbed.

The fame of Coningsby had preceded him at Cambridge. No man ever went up from whom more was expected in every way. The dons awaited a sucking member for the University, the undergraduates were prepared to welcome a new Alcibiades. He was neither: neither a prig nor a profligate; but a quiet, gentlemanlike, yet spirited young man, gracious to all, but

intimate only with his old friends, and giving always an impression in his general tone that his soul was not absorbed in his University.

And yet perhaps he might have been coddled into a prig, or flattered into a profligate, had it not been for the intervening experience which he had gained between his school and college life. That had visibly impressed upon him what before he had only faintly acquired from books, that there was a greater and more real world awaiting him, than to be found in those bowers of Academus to which youth is apt at first to attribute an exaggerated importance. A world of action and passion, of power and peril; a world for which a great preparation was indeed necessary, severe and profound, but not altogether such an one as was now offered to him. Yet this want must be supplied, and by himself. Coningsby had already acquirements sufficiently considerable with some formal application to ensure him at all times his degree. He was no longer engrossed by the intention

he once proudly entertained of trying for honours, and he chalked out for himself that range of reading, which, digested by his thought, should furnish him in some degree with that various knowledge of the history of man to which he aspired. No, we must not for a moment believe that accident could have long diverted the course of a character so strong. The same desire that prevented the Castle of his grandfather from proving a Castle of Indolence to him, that saved him from a too early initiation into the seductive distractions of a refined and luxurious society, would have preserved Coningsby from the puerile profligacy of a college life, or from being that idol of private tutors, a young pedant. It was that noble ambition, the highest and the best, that must be born in the heart and organized in the brain, which will not let a man be content unless his intellectual power is recognised by his race, and desires that it should contribute to their welfare. It is the heroic feeling; the feeling that in old days produced demi-gods; without which no State is safe; without which

political institutions are meat without salt; the Crown a bauble, the Church an establishment, Parliaments debating clubs, and Civilization itself but a fitful and transient dream.

CHAPTER II.

LESS than a year after the arrival of Coningsby at Cambridge, and which he had only once quitted in the interval, and that to pass a short time in Berkshire with his friend Buckhurst, occurred the death of King William IV. This event necessarily induced a dissolution of the Parliament elected under the auspices of Sir Robert Peel in 1834, and after the publication of the Tamworth manifesto.

The death of the King was a great blow to what had now become to be generally styled the "Conservative Cause." It was quite unexpected; within a fortnight of his death eminent persons

still believed that "it was only the hay fever." Had his Majesty lived until after the then impending Registration, the Whigs would have been again dismissed. Nor is there any doubt that under these circumstances the "Conservative Cause" would have secured for the new ministers a Parliamentary majority. What would have been the consequences to the country if the four years of Whig rule from 1837 to 1841 had not occurred? It is easier to decide what would have been the consequences to the Whigs. Some of their great friends might have lacked blue ribbons and Lord Lieutenantcies; and some of their little friends comfortable places in the Customs and Excise. They would have lost undoubtedly the distribution of four years patronage; we can hardly say the exercise of four years power; but they would have existed at this moment as the most powerful and popular opposition that ever flourished in this country, if indeed the course of events had not long ere this carried them back to their old posts in a proud and intelligible position. The Reform Bill did not do

more injury to the Tories than the attempt to govern this country without a decided Parliamentary majority did the Whigs. The greatest of all evils is a weak government. They cannot carry good measures, they are forced to carry bad ones.

The death of the King was a great blow to the "Conservative Cause;" that is to say, it darkened the brow of Tadpole, quailed the heart of Taper, crushed all the rising hopes of those numerous statesmen who believe the country must be saved if they receive twelve hundred a year. It is a peculiar class, that; £1,200 per annum, paid quarterly, is their idea of political science and human nature. To receive £1,200 per annum is government; to try to receive £1,200 per annum is opposition; to wish to receive £1,200 per annum is ambition. If a man wants to get into Parliament, and does not want to get £1,200 per annum, they look upon him as daft; as a benighted being. They stare in each other's face and ask, "What can * * * * want to get into Parliament for?" They have no conception that public

reputation is a motive power, and with many men the greatest. They have as much idea of fame or celebrity, even of the masculine impulse of an honourable pride, as eunuchs of manly joys.

The twelve-hundred-a-yearers were in despair about the King's death. Their loyal souls were sorely grieved that his gracious Majesty had not outlived the registration. All their happy inventions about "hay-fever," circulated in confidence and sent by post to chairmen of conservative associations, followed by a royal funeral! General election about to take place with the old registration; government boroughs against them, and the young Queen for a cry. What a cry! Youth, beauty, and a Queen! Taper grew pale at the thought. What could they possibly get up to countervail it? Even Church and Corn Laws together, would not do; and then Church was sulky, for "the Conservative Cause" had just made it a present of a Commission, and all that the country gentlemen knew of Conservativism was that it would not repeal the malt tax, and had made them repeal

their pledges. Yet a cry must be found. A dissolution without a cry, in the Taper philosophy, would be a world without a sun. A rise might be got by "Independence of the House of Lords;" and Lord Lyndhurst's summaries might be well circulated at one penny per hundred, large discount allowed to Conservative Associations and endless credit. Tadpole however was never very fond of the House of Lords; besides it was too limited. Tadpole wanted the young Queen brought in; the rogue! At length one morning, Taper came up to him with a slip of paper and a smile of complacent austerity on his dull visage, "I think Mr. Tadpole that will do."

Tadpole took the paper and read "OUR YOUNG QUEEN, AND OUR OLD INSTITUTIONS!"

The eyes of Tadpole sparkled as if they had met a gnomic sentence of Periander or Thales; then turning to Taper, he said,

"What do you think of 'ancient,' instead of 'old'?"

"You cannot have 'Our modern Queen, and our ancient Institutions,'" said Mr. Taper.

The dissolution was soon followed by an election for the borough of Cambridge. The "Conservative Cause" candidate was an old Etonian. That was a bond of sympathy which imparted zeal even to those who were a little sceptical of the essential virtues of Conservativism. Every under-graduate especially who remembered "the distant spires," became enthusiastic. Buckhurst took a very decided part. He cheered, he canvassed, he brought men to the poll whom none could move; he influenced his friends and his companions. Even Coningsby caught the contagion, and Vere, who had imbibed much of Coningsby's political sentiment, prevailed on himself to be neutral. The Conservative Cause triumphed in the person of its Eton champion. The day the member was chaired, several men in Coningsby's rooms were talking over their triumph.

"By Jove," said the panting Buckhurst, throwing himself on the sofa, "it was well done; never was anything better done. An immense triumph! The greatest triumph the Conservative Cause has had. And yet," he

added, laughing, "if any fellow were to ask me what the Conservative Cause was, I am sure I should not know what to say."

"Why it's the cause of our glorious institutions," said Coningsby. "A Crown robbed of its prerogatives; a Church controlled by a commission; and an Aristocracy that does not lead."

"Under whose genial influence, the order of the Peasantry, 'a country's pride,' has vanished from the face of the land," said Henry Sydney, "and is succeeded by a race of serfs, who are called labourers and who burn ricks."

"Under which," continued Coningsby, "the crown has become a cipher; the church a sect; the nobility drones; and the people drudges."

"It is the great constitutional cause," said Lord Vere, "that refuses everything to opposition; yields everything to agitation: conservative in Parliament, destructive out of doors; that has no objection to any change provided only it be effected by unauthorized means."

"The first public association of men," said Coningsby, "who have worked for an avowed end, without enunciating a single principle."

"And who have established political infidelity throughout the land," said Lord Henry.

"By Jove!" said Buckhurst, "what infernal fools we have made ourselves this last week!"

"Nay," said Coningsby, smiling, "it was our last schoolboy weakness. Floreat Etona, under all circumstances."

"I certainly, Coningsby," said Lord Vere, "shall not assume the Conservative Cause, instead of the Cause for which Hampden died in the field, and Sydney on the scaffold."

"The cause for which Hampden died in the field, and Sydney on the scaffold," said Coningsby, "was the cause of the Venetian Republic."

"How—how?" said Buckhurst.

"I repeat it," said Coningsby. "The great object of the Whig leaders in England from the first movement under Hampden to the last more successful one in 1688, was to establish in England a high aristocratic republic on the model of the Venetian, then the study and admiration of all speculative politicians. Read Harrington; turn over Algernon Sydney; and

you will see how the minds of the English leaders in the seventeenth century were saturated with the Venetian type. And they at length succeeded. William III. found them out in an instant. He told the Whig leaders 'I will not be a Doge.' He balanced parties; he baffled them as the Puritans baffled them fifty years before. The reign of Anne was a struggle between the Venetian and the English systems. Two great Whig nobles, Argyle and Somerset, worthy of seats in the Council of Ten, forced their Sovereign on her death-bed to change the ministry. They accomplished their object. They brought in a new family on their own terms. George I. was a Doge; George II. was a Doge; they were what William III., a great man, would not be. George III. tried not to be a Doge, but it was impossible materially to resist the deeply laid combination. He might get rid of the Whig magnificoes, but he could not rid himself of the Venetian constitution. And a Venetian constitution did govern England from the accession of the House of Hanover until 1832. Now I do not ask

you, Vere, to relinquish the political tenets which in ordinary times would have been your inheritance. All I say is, the constitution introduced by your ancestors having been subverted by their descendants your contemporaries, beware of still holding Venetian principles of government when you have not a Venetian constitution to govern with. Do what I am doing, what Henry Sydney and Buckhurst are doing, what other men that I could mention are doing, hold yourself aloof from political parties which, from the necessity of things, have ceased to have distinctive principles, and are therefore practically only factions; and wait and see, whether with patience, energy, honour, and Christian faith, and a desire to look to the national welfare and not to sectional and limited interests; whether, I say, we may not discover some great principles to guide us, to which we may adhere, and which then, if true, will ultimately guide and control others."

"The Whigs are worn out," said Vere, "Conservativism is a sham, and Radicalism is pollution."

"I certainly," said Buckhurst, "when I get into the House of Commons, shall speak my mind without reference to any party whatever; and all I hope is, we may all come in at the same time, and then we may make a party of our own."

"I have always heard my father say," said Vere, "that there was nothing so difficult as to organize an independent party in the House of Commons."

"Ay! but that was in the Venetian period, Vere," said Henry Sydney smiling.

"I dare say," said Buckhurst, "the only way to make a party in the House of Commons is just the one that succeeds anywhere else. Men must associate together. When you are living in the same set, dining together every day, and quizzing the Dons, it is astonishing how well men agree. As for me, I never would enter into a conspiracy, unless the conspirators were fellows who had been at Eton with me; and then there would be no treachery."

"Let us think of principles, and not of parties," said Coningsby.

"For my part," said Buckhurst, "whenever a political system is breaking up, as in this country at present, I think the very best thing is to brush all the old Dons off the stage. They never take to the new road kindly. They are always hampered by their exploded prejudices and obsolete traditions. I don't think a single man, Vere, that sat in the Venetian Senate ought to be allowed to sit in the present English House of Commons."

"Well no one does in our family except my uncle Philip," said Lord Henry; "and the moment I want it, he will resign; for he detests Parliament. It interferes so with his hunting."

"Well, we have all fair parliamentary prospects," said Buckhurst. "That is something. I wish we were in now."

"Heaven forbid," said Coningsby. "I tremble at the responsibility of a seat at any time. With my present unsettled and perplexed views, there is nothing from which I should recoil so much as the House of Commons."

"I quite agree with you," said Henry Sydney.

"The best thing we can do is to keep as clear of political party as we possibly can. How many men waste the best part of their lives in painfully apologising for a conscientious deviation from a parliamentary course which they adopted when they were boys, without thought, or prompted by some local connexion or interest to secure a seat."

It was the midnight following the morning when this conversation took place, that Coningsby alone, and having just quitted a rather boisterous party of wassailers who had been celebrating at Buckhurst's rooms the triumph of "Eton Statesmen," if not of Conservative principles, stopped in the precincts of that Royal College, that reminded him of his school-days, to cool his brow in the summer air, that even at that hour was soft, and to calm his mind in the contemplation of the still, the sacred, and the beauteous scene that surrounded him.

There rose that fane, the pride and boast of Cambridge, not unworthy to rank among the chief temples of Christendom. Its vast form was exaggerated in the uncertain hour; part

shrouded in the deepest darkness, while a flood of silver light suffused its southern side, distinguished with revealing beam the huge ribs of its buttresses, and bathed with mild lustre its airy pinnacles.

"Where is the spirit that raised these walls?" thought Coningsby. "Is it indeed extinct? Is then this civilization, so much vaunted, inseparable from moderate feelings and little thoughts? If so, give me back barbarism! But I cannot believe it. Man that is made in the image of the Creator, is made for God-like deeds. Come what come may, I will cling to the heroic principle. It can alone satisfy my soul."

CHAPTER III.

We must now revert to the family, or rather the household of Lord Monmouth, in which considerable changes and events had occurred since the visit of Coningsby to the Castle in the preceding autumn.

In the first place, the earliest frost of the winter had carried off the aged proprietor of Hellingsley, that contiguous estate which Lord Monmouth so much coveted, the possession of which was indeed one of the few objects of his life, and to secure which, he was prepared to pay far beyond its intrinsic value, great as that undoubtedly was. Yet Lord Monmouth did not become its possessor. Long as his mind

had been intent upon the subject, skilful as had been his combinations to secure his prey, and unlimited the means which were to achieve his purpose, another stepped in, and without his privity, without even the consolation of a struggle, stole away the prize; and this too a man whom he hated, almost the only individual out of his own family that he did hate; a man who had crossed him before in similar enterprises; who was his avowed foe; had lavished treasure to oppose him in elections; raised associations against his interest; established journals to assail him; denounced him in public; agitated against him in private; had declared more than once that he would make "the county too hot for him;" his personal, inveterate, indomitable foe, Mr. Millbank of Millbank.

The loss of Hellingsley was a bitter disappointment to Lord Monmouth; but the loss of it to such an adversary touched him to the quick. He did not seek to control his anger; he could not succeed even in concealing his agitation. He threw upon Rigby that glance so rare with him, but under which men always

quailed; that play of the eye which Lord Monmouth shared in common with Henry VIII. that struck awe into the trembling Commons when they had given an obnoxious vote, as the King entered the gallery of his palace, and looked around him.

It was a look which implied the dreadful question: "Why have I bought you that such things should happen? Why have I unlimited means and unscrupulous agents?" It made even Rigby feel; even his brazen tones were hushed.

To fly from everything disagreeable was the practical philosophy of Lord Monmouth; but he was as brave as he was sensual. He would not shrink before the new proprietor of Hellingsley. He therefore remained at the castle with an aching heart, and redoubled his hospitalities. An ordinary mind might have been soothed by the unceasing consideration and the skilful and delicate flattery that ever surrounded Lord Monmouth; but his sagacious intelligence was never for a moment the dupe of his vanity. He had no self-love, and as he valued no one,

there were really no feelings to play upon. He saw through everybody and everything; and when he had detected their purpose, discovered their weakness or their vileness, he calculated whether they could contribute to his pleasure or his convenience in a degree which counterbalanced the objections which might be urged against their intentions, or their less pleasing and profitable qualities. To be pleased was always a principal object with Lord Monmouth; but when a man wants vengeance, gay amusement is not exactly a satisfactory substitute.

A month elapsed, Lord Monmouth with a serene or smiling visage to his guests, but in private taciturn and morose. He scarcely ever gave a word to Mr. Rigby, but continually bestowed on him glances which painfully affected the appetite of that gentleman. In a hundred ways it was intimated to Mr. Rigby that he was not a welcome guest, and yet something was continually given him to do which rendered it impossible for him to take his departure. In this state of affairs, another event occurred which changed the current of feeling, and by

its possible consequences, distracted the Marquess from his brooding meditations over his discomfiture in the matter of Hellingsley. The Prince Colonna, who, since the steeple-chase, had imbibed a morbid predilection for such amusements, and indeed for every species of rough riding, was thrown from his horse and killed on the spot.

This calamity broke up the party at Coningsby, which was not at the moment very numerous. Mr. Rigby, by command, instantly seized the opportunity of preventing other guests who were expected from arriving. This catastrophe was the cause of Mr. Rigby resuming in a great measure his old position in the castle. There were a great many things to be done, and all disagreeable; he achieved them all, and studied everybody's convenience. Coroner's inquests, funerals especially, weeping women, these were all spectacles which Lord Monmouth could not endure, but he was so high-bred, that he would not for the world that there should be in manner or degree the slightest deficiency of propriety or

even sympathy. But he wanted somebody to do everything that was proper; to be considerate and consoling and sympathetic. Mr. Rigby did it all; gave evidence at the inquest, was chief mourner at the funeral, and arranged everything so well that not a single emblem of death crossed the sight of Lord Monmouth; while Madame Colonna found submission in his exhortations, and the Princess Lucretia, a little more pale and pensive than usual, listened with tranquillity to his discourse on the vanity of all sublunary things.

When the tumult had subsided, and habits and feelings had fallen into their old routine, and relapsed into their ancient channels, the Marquess proposed that they should all return to London, and with great formality, though with great warmth, begged that Madame Colonna would ever consider his roof as her own. All were glad to quit the castle, which now presented a scene so different to its former animation, and Madame Colonna, weeping, accepted the hospitality of her friend, until the impending expansion of the spring would per-

mit her to return to Italy. This notice of her return to her own country seemed to occasion the Marquess great disquietude.

After they had remained about a month in London, Madame Colonna sent for Mr. Rigby one morning to tell him how very painful it was to her feelings to remain under the roof of Monmouth House without the sanction of a husband; that the circumstance of being a foreigner, under such unusual affliction, might have excused, though not authorized, the step at first, and for a moment; but that the continuance of such a course was quite out of the question; that she owed it to herself, to her step-child, no longer to trespass on this friendly hospitality; that if persisted in, might be liable to misconstruction. Mr. Rigby listened with great attention to this statement, and never in the least interrupted Madame Colonna; and then offered to do that which he was convinced the lady desired, namely to make the Marquess acquainted with the painful state of her feelings. This he did according to his fashion, and with sufficient dexterity. Mr. Rigby him-

self was extremely anxious to know which way the wind blew, and the mission with which he had been entrusted, fell in precisely with his inclinations and necessities. The Marquess listened to the communication and sighed, then turned gently round and surveyed himself in the mirror and sighed again, then said to Rigby:

"You understand exactly what I mean, Rigby. It is quite ridiculous their going, and infinitely distressing to me. They must stay."

Rigby repaired to the Princess full of mysterious bustle, and with a face beaming with importance and satisfaction. He made much of the two sighs; fully justified the confidence of the Marquess in his comprehension of unexplained intentions; prevailed on Madame Colonna to have some regard for the feelings of one so devoted; expatiated on the insignificance of worldly misconstructions, when replied to by such honourable intentions; and fully succeeded in his mission. They did stay. Month after month rolled on, and still they stayed; every month all the family becoming more re-

signed or more content, and more cheerful. As for the Marquess himself, Mr. Rigby never remembered him more serene and even joyous. His Lordship scarcely ever entered general society. The Colonna family remained in strict seclusion; and he preferred the company of these accomplished and congenial friends to the mob of the great world.

Between Madame Colonna and Mr. Rigby there had always subsisted considerable confidence. Now, that gentleman seemed to have achieved fresh and greater claims to her regard. In the pleasure with which he looked forward to her approaching alliance with his patron, he reminded her of the readiness with which he had embraced her suggestions for the marriage of her daughter with Coningsby. Always obliging, she was never wearied of chaunting his praises to her noble admirer, who was apparently much gratified she should have bestowed her esteem on one of whom she would necessarily in after life see so much. It is seldom the lot of husbands that their confidential friends gain the regards of their brides.

"I am delighted you all like Rigby," said Lord Monmouth, "as you will see so much of him."

The remembrance of the Hellingsley failure seemed to be quite erased from the memory of the Marquess. Rigby never recollected him more cordial and confidential, and more equable in his manner. He told Rigby one day, that he wished that Monmouth House should possess the most sumptuous and the most fanciful boudoir in London or Paris. What a hint for Rigby! That gentleman consulted the first artists, and gave them some hints in return; his researches on domestic decoration ranged through all ages; he even meditated a rapid tour to mature his inventions; but his confidence in his native taste and genius, ultimately convinced him that this movement was unnecessary.

The summer advanced; the death of the King occurred; the dissolution summoned Rigby to Coningsby and the borough of Darlford. His success was marked certain in the secret books of Tadpole and Taper. A manufacturing town, enfranchised under the Reform

Act, already gained by the Conservative cause! Here was reaction—here influence of property! Influence of character, too; for no one was so popular as Lord Monmouth; a most distinguished nobleman, of strict Conservative principles, who, if he carried the county and the manufacturing borough also, merited the strawberry-leaf.

"There will be no holding Rigby," said Taper; "I'm afraid he will be looking for something very high."

"The higher the better," rejoined Tadpole, "and then he will not interfere with us. I like your high-fliers; it is your plodders I detest, wearing old hats and high-lows, speaking in committee, and thinking they are men of business: d—n them!"

Rigby went down, and made some very impressive speeches; at least they read very well in some of his second-rate journals, where all the uproar figured as loud cheering, and the interruption of a cabbage-stalk was represented as a question from some intelligent individual in the crowd. The fact is, Rigby bored his au-

dience too much with history, especially with the French Revolution, which he fancied was his "forte," so that the people at last, whenever he made any allusion to the subject, were almost as much terrified as if they had seen the guillotine.

Rigby had as yet one great advantage; he had no opponent; and without personal opposition, no contest can be very bitter. It was for some days Rigby versus Liberal principles; and Rigby had much the best of it; for he abused Liberal principles roundly in his harangues, who not being represented on the occasion made no reply; while plenty of ale, and some capital songs by Lucian Gay, who went down express, gave the right cue to the mob, who declared in chorus, beneath the windows of Rigby's hotel, that he was "a fine old English gentleman!"

But there was to be a contest; no question about that, and a sharp one, although Rigby was to win, and well. The liberal party had been so fastidious about their new candidate, that they had none ready though several biting.

Jawster Sharp thought at one time that sheer necessity would give him another chance still; but even Rigby was preferable to Jawster Sharp, who, finding it would not do, published his long-prepared valedictory address, in which he told his constituents, that having long sacrificed his health to their interests, he was now obliged to retire into the bosom of his family. And a very well provided for family, too.

All this time the Liberal deputation from Darlford—two aldermen, three town counsellors, and the Secretary of the Reform Association, were walking about London like mad things, eating luncheons and looking for a candidate. They called at the Reform Club twenty times in the morning, badgered whips and red-tapers, were introduced to candidates, badgered candidates; examined would-be members as if they were at a cattle show, listened to political pedigrees, dictated political pledges, referred to Hansard to see how men had voted, inquired whether men had spoken, finally discussed terms. But they never could hit the right man. If the principles were right, there was no money; and

if money were ready, money would not take pledges. In fact they wanted a Phœnix; a very rich man, who would do exactly as they liked, with extremely low opinions and with very high connexions.

"If he would go for the ballot and had a handle to his name, it would have the best effect," said the secretary of the Reform Association, "because you see we are fighting against a Right Honourable, and you have no idea how that takes with the mob."

The deputation had been three days in town, and urged by despatches by every train to bring affairs to a conclusion, jaded, perplexed, confused, they were ready to fall into the hands of the first jobber or bold adventurer. They discussed over their dinner at a Strand Coffee-house the claims of the various candidates who had presented themselves. Mr. Donald Macpherson Macfarlane, who would only pay the legal expenses: he was soon dispatched. Mr. Gingerly Browne of Jermyn Street, the younger son of a Baronet, who would go as far as a £1000, provided the seat was secured. Mr.

Juggins, a distiller, £2000 man; but would not agree to any annual subscriptions. Sir Baptist Placid, vague about expenditure, but repeatedly declaring that "there could be no difficulty on that head." He however had a moral objection to subscribing to the races,—and that was a great point at Darlford. Sir Baptist would subscribe a guinea per annum to the Infirmary, and the same to all religious societies, without any distinction of sects—but races, it was not the sum, £100 per annum, but the principle. He had a moral objection.

In short the deputation began to suspect what was the truth, that they were a day after the fair, and that all the electioneering rips that swarm in the purlieus of political clubs during an impending dissolution of Parliament, men who become political characters in their small circle, because they have been talked of as once having an intention to stand for places for which they never offered themselves, or for having stood for places, where they never could by any circumstance have succeeded, were in fact nibbling at their dainty morsel.

At this moment of despair, a ray of hope was imparted to them by a confidential note from a secretary of the Treasury, who wished to see them at the Reform Club on the morrow. You may be sure they were punctual to their appointment. The secretary received them with great consideration. He had got them a candidate, and one of high mark—the son of a Peer, and connected with the highest Whig houses. Their eyes sparkled. A real honourable. If they liked he would introduce them immediately to the Honourable Alberic de Crecy. He had only to introduce them, as there was no difficulty either as to means or opinions, expenses or pledges.

The secretary returned with a young gentleman whose diminutive stature would seem, from his smooth and singularly puerile countenance, to be merely the consequence of his very tender years, but Mr. de Crecy was really of age, or at least would be by the nomination day. He did not say a word, but looked like the rosebud which dangled in the button-hole of his frock coat. The Aldermen and Town Coun-

sellors were what is sometimes emphatically styled flabbergasted; they were speechless from bewilderment. "Mr. de Crecy will go for the ballot," said the secretary of the Treasury with an audacious eye and a demure look, "and for Total and Immediate if you press him hard; but don't if you can help it, because he has an uncle, an old county member who has prejudices, and might disinherit him. However, we answer for him. And I am very happy that I have been the means of bringing about an arrangement, which I feel will be mutually advantageous." And so saying the secretary effected his escape.

Circumstances, however, retarded for a season the political career of the Honourable Alberic de Crecy. While the Liberal party at Darlford were suffering under the daily inflictions of Mr. Rigby's slashing style, and the post brought them very unsatisfactory prospects of a champion, one offered himself, and in an address which intimated that he was no man of straw, likely to recede from any contest in which he chose to embark. The town was suddenly placarded

with a letter to the Independent Electors from Mr. Millbank the new proprietor of Hellingsley.

He expressed himself as one not anxious to obtrude himself on their attention and founding no claim to their confidence on his recent acquisition; but at the same time as one resolved that the free and enlightened community, with which he must necessarily hereafter be much connected, should not become the nomination Borough of any Peer of the realm without a struggle if they chose to make one. And so he offered himself if they could not find a better candidate without waiting for the ceremony of a requisition. He was exactly the man they wanted; and though he had "no handle to his name," and was somewhat impracticable about pledges, his fortune was so great, and his character so high, that it might be hoped that the people would be almost as content as if they were appealed to by some obscure scion of factitious nobility subscribing to political engagements which he could not comprehend, and which in general are vomited with as much facility as they are swallowed.

CHAPTER IV.

THE people of Darlford who, as long as the contest for their representation remained between Mr. Rigby and the abstraction called Liberal Principles, appeared to be very indifferent about the result, the moment they learned that for the phrase had been substituted a substance, and that too in the form of a gentleman, who was soon to figure as their resident neighbour, became excited, speedily enthusiastic. All the bells of all the churches rang when Mr. Millbank commenced his canvass; the Conservatives, on the alert, if not alarmed, insisted on their champion also showing himself in all directions; and in the course of four-and-twenty hours, such is

the contagion of popular feeling, the town was divided into two parties, the vast majority of which were firmly convinced that the country could only be saved by the return of Mr. Rigby, or preserved from inevitable destruction by the election of Mr. Millbank.

The results of the two canvasses were such as had been anticipated from the previous reports of the respective agents and supporters. In these days the personal canvass of a candidate is a mere form. The whole country that is to be invaded has been surveyed and mapped out before entry; every position reconnoitered; the chain of communications complete. In the present case as is not unusual, both candidates were really supported by numerous and reputable adherents; and both had very good grounds for believing that they would be ultimately successful. But there was a body of the electors sufficiently numerous to turn the election who would not promise their votes: conscientious men who felt the responsibility of the duty that the constitution had entrusted to their discharge, and who would not make

up their minds without duly weighing the respective merits of the two rivals. This class of deeply meditative individuals are distinguished not only by their pensive turn of mind; but by a charitable vein that seems to pervade their being. Not only will they think of your request, but for their parts they wish both sides equally well. Decision indeed, as it must dash the hopes of one of their solicitors, seems infinitely painful to them; they have always a good reason for postponing it. If you seek their suffrage during the canvass, they reply that the writ not having come down, the day of election is not yet fixed. If you call again to inform them that the writ has arrived, they rejoin that perhaps after all there may not be a contest. If you call a third time half dead with fatigue, to give them friendly notice that both you and your rival have pledged yourselves to go to the poll, they twitch their trowsers, rub their hands, and with a dull grin observe,

"Well, sir, we shall see."

"Come, Mr. Jobson," says one of the com-

mittee with an insinuating smile, "give Mr. Millbank one."

"Jobson, I think you and I know each other," says a most influential supporter with a knowing nod.

"Yes, Mr. Smith, I should think we did."

"Come, come, give us one."

"Well, I have not made up my mind yet, gentlemen."

"Jobson!" says a solemn voice. "Didn't you tell me the other night you wished well to this gentleman?"

"So I do; I wish well to everybody," replies the imperturbable Jobson.

"Well, Jobson," exclaims another member of the committee with a sigh, "who could have supposed that you would have been an enemy!"

"I don't wish to be no enemy to no man, Mr. Trip."

"Come, Jobson," says a jolly tanner, "if I wanted to be a Parliament man, I don't think you could refuse me one!"

"I don't think I could, Mr. Oakfield."

"Well then give it to my friend."

"Well, sir, I'll think about it."

"Leave him to me," says another member of the committee with a significant look. "I know how to get round him. It's all right."

"Yes, leave him to Hayfield, Mr. Millbank, he knows how to manage him."

But all the same, Jobson continues to look as little tractable and lamb-like as can be well fancied.

And here in a work, which in an unpretending shape aspires to take neither an uninformed nor a partial view of the political history of the ten eventful years of the Reform struggle, we should pause for a moment to observe the strangeness, that only five years after the reconstruction of the electoral body by the Whig party, in a borough called into political existence by their policy, a manufacturing town too, their candidate comprising in his person every quality and circumstance which could recommend him to the constituency, and his opponent the worst specimen of the Old Generation, a political adventurer, who owed the least disreputable part of his notoriety to his opposition

to the Reform Bill; that in such a borough under such circumstances there should be a contest, and that too one of a very doubtful issue.

What was the cause of this? Are we to seek it in the "Re-action" of the Tadpoles and the Tapers? That would not be a very satisfactory solution. Re-action to a certain extent is the law of human existence. In the particular state of affairs before us; England after the Reform Act; it never could be doubtful, that Time would gradually, and in some instances, rapidly, counteract the national impulse of 1832. There never could have been a question, for example, that the English counties would have reverted to their natural allegiance to their proprietors; but the results of the appeals to the third Estate in 1835 and 1837 are not to be accounted for by a mere re-adjustment of legitimate influences.

The truth is, that considerable as are the abilities of the Whig leaders; highly accomplished as many of them unquestionably must be acknowledged in parliamentary debate; ex-

perienced in council; sedulous in office; eminent as scholars; powerful from their position; the absence of individual influence, of the pervading authority of a commanding mind, has been the cause of the fall of the Whig party.

Such a supremacy was generally acknowledged in Lord Grey on the accession of this party to power; but it was the supremacy of a tradition rather than of a fact. Almost at the outset of his authority his successor was indicated. When the crisis arrived, the intended successor was not in the Whig ranks. It is in this virtual absence of a real and recognised leader, almost from the moment that they passed their great measure, that we must seek a chief cause of all that insubordination, all those distempered ambitions, and all those dark intrigues, that finally broke up not only the Whig government, but the Whig party; demoralized their ranks; and sent them to the country, both in 1835 and 1837 with every illusion, which had operated so happily in their favour in 1832, scattered to the winds. In all things

we trace the irresistible influence of the individual.

And yet the interval that elapsed between 1835 and 1837 proved, that there was all this time in the Whig array one entirely competent to the office of leading a great party, though his capacity for that fulfilment was too tardily recognised.

Lord John Russell has that degree of imagination which though evinced rather in sentiment than expression, still enables him to generalize from the details of his reading and experience; and to take those comprehensive views, which however easily depreciated by ordinary men in an age of routine, are indispensable to a statesman in the conjunctures in which we live. He understands therefore his position; and he has the moral intrepidity which prompts him ever to dare that which his intellect assures him is politic. He is consequently at the same time, sagacious and bold, in council. As an administrator, he is prompt and indefatigable. He is not a natural orator; and labours under physical deficiencies which even a Demosthenic

impulse could scarcely overcome. But he is experienced in debate; quick in reply, fertile in resource; takes large views; and frequently compensates for a dry and hesitating manner by the expression of those noble truths, that flash across the fancy, and rise spontaneously to the lip, of men of poetic temperament when addressing popular assemblies. If we add to this a private life of dignified repute; the accidents of his birth and rank, which never can be severed from the man, the scion of a great historic family, and born as it were to the hereditary service of the State; it is difficult to ascertain at what period, or under what circumstances, the Whig party have ever possessed, or could obtain, a more efficient leader.

But we must return to the Darlford election. The class of thoughtful voters was sufficiently numerous in that borough to render the result of the contest doubtful to the last, and on the eve of the day of nomination both parties were equally sanguine.

Nomination day altogether is a most unsatisfactory affair. There is little to be done, and

that little mere form. The tedious hours remain; and no one can settle his mind to any thing. It is not a holiday, for every one is serious; it is not business, for no one can attend to it; it is not a contest, for there is no canvassing; nor an election, for there is no poll. It is a day of lounging without an object, and luncheons without an appetite; of hopes and fears; confidence and dejection; bravado bets and secret hedging; and about midnight, of furious suppers of grilled bones, brandy-and-water, and recklessness.

The president and vice-president of the Conservative Association, the secretary and the four solicitors who were agents, had impressed upon Mr. Rigby that it was of the utmost importance, and must produce a great moral effect if he obtained the show of hands. With his powers of eloquence and their secret organization they flattered themselves it might be done. With this view Rigby inflicted a speech of more than two hours' duration on the electors, who bore it very kindly, as the mob likes above all things that the ceremonies of

nomination day should not be cut short: moreover there is nothing that the mob likes so much as a speech. Rigby therefore had on the whole a far from unfavourable audience, and he availed himself of their forbearance. He brought in his crack theme the guillotine, and dilated so elaborately upon its qualities, that one of the gentlemen below could not refrain from exclaiming: "I wish you may get it." This exclamation gave Mr. Rigby what is called a great opening, which, like a practised speaker, he immediately seized. He denounced the sentiment as "un-English," and got very much cheered. Excited by this success Rigby began calling everything else "un-English" with which he did not agree, until menacing murmurs began to rise, when he shifted the subject, and rose into a grand peroration, in which he assured them that the eyes of the whole empire were on this particular election, (cries of "that's true," from all sides) and that England expected every man to do his duty.

"And who do you expect to do yours?"

inquired a gentleman below, "about that ere pension?"

"Rigby," screeched a hoarse voice, "don't you mind; you guv it them well."

"Rigby, keep up your spirits old chap: we will have you."

"Now," said a stentorian voice, and a man as tall as Saul looked round him. This was the engaged leader of the Conservative mob; the eye of every one of his minions was instantly on him. "Now! Our young Queen and our old institutions; Rigby for ever!"

This was a signal for the instant appearance of the leader of the Liberal mob. Magog Wrath, not so tall as Bully Bluck his rival, had a voice almost as powerful, a back much broader, and a countenance far more forbidding. "Now, my boys; the Queen and Millbank for ever."

These rival cries were the signals for a fight between the two bands of gladiators in the face of the hustings; the body of the people little interfering. Bully Bluck seized Magog Wrath's colours; they wrestled, they seized each other; their supporters were engaged in mutual

contest; it appeared to be a most alarming and perilous fray; several ladies from the windows screamed, one fainted; a band of special constables pushed their way through the mob; you heard their staves resounding on the skulls of all who opposed them, especially the little boys: order was at length restored; and to tell the truth, the only hurts inflicted were those which came from the special constables. Bully Bluck and Magog Wrath, with all their fierce looks, flaunting colours, loud cheers, and desperate assaults, were after all only a couple of Condottieri, who were cautious never to wound each other. They were in fact a very peaceful police, who kept the town in awe, and prevented others from being mischievous who were more inclined to do harm. Their hired gangs were the safety valves for all the scamps of the borough, who receiving a few shillings per head for their nominal service, and as much drink as they liked after the contest, were bribed and organized into peace and sobriety on the days in which their excesses were most to be apprehended.

Now Mr. Millbank came forward: he was very brief compared with Mr. Rigby; but clear and terse. No one could misunderstand him. He did not favour his hearers with any history, but gave them his views about taxes, free trade, placemen and pensioners, whoever and wherever they might be.

"Hilloa, Rigby, about that ere pension?"

"Millbank for ever! We will have him."

"Never mind, Rigby, you'll come in next time."

Mr. Millbank was very energetic about resident representatives, but did not understand that a resident representative meant the nominee of a great lord, who lived in a great castle, (great cheering). There was a Lord once who declared that if he liked, he would return his negro valet to Parliament; but Mr. Millbank thought those days were over. It remained for the people of Darlford to determine whether he was mistaken.

"Never!" exclaimed the mob. "Millbank for ever! Rigby in the river! No niggers, no walets!"

"Three groans for Rigby."

"His language ain't as purty as the Lunnun

chaps," said a critic below; "but he speaks from his art; and give me the man who as got a art."

"That's your time of day, Mr. Robinson."

"Now," said Magog Wrath looking around. "Now—the Queen and Millbank for ever! Hurrah!"

The show of hands was entirely in favour of Mr. Millbank. Scarcely a hand was held up for Mr. Rigby below, except by Bully Bluck and his prætorians. The Chairman and the Deputy Chairman of the Conservative Association, the Secretary and the four agents severally and respectively went up to Mr. Rigby and congratulated him on the result, as it was a known fact "that the show of hands never won."

The eve of polling day was now at hand. This is the most critical period of an election. All night parties in disguise were perambulating the different wards, watching each others tactics; masks, wigs, false noses, gentles in livery coats, men in female attire—a silent carnival of manœuvre, vigilance, anxiety, and trepidation. The thoughtful voters about this time make up their

minds; the enthusiasts who have told you twenty times a day for the last fortnight, that they would get up in the middle of the night to serve you, require the most watchful cooping; all the individuals who have assured you that "their word is their bond," change sides.

Two of the Rigbyites met in the market-place about an hour after midnight.

"Well, how goes it?" said one.

"I have been the rounds. The blunts going like the ward-pump. I saw a man come out of Moffatt's house, muffled up with a mask on. I dodged him. It was Biggs."

"You don't mean that, do you? D—e I'll answer for Moffatt."

"I never thought he was a true man."

"Told Robins?"

"I could not see him; but I met young Gunning and told him."

"Young Gunning! That won't do."

"I thought he was as right as the town clock."

"So did I once. Hush! who comes here? The enemy, Franklin and Sampson Potts. Keep close."

"I'll speak to them. Good night, Potts. Up rather late to-night?"

"All fair election time. You ain't snoring are you?"

"Well, I hope the best man will win."

"I am sure he will."

"You must go for Moffatt early, to breakfast at the White Lion; that's your sort. Don't leave him, and poll him yourself. I am going off to Solomon Lacey's. He has got four Millbankites cooped up very drunk, and I want to get them quietly into the country before day-break."

'Tis polling day! The candidates are roused from their slumbers at an early hour by the music of their own bands perambulating the town, and each playing the "conquering hero" to sustain the courage of their jaded employers by depriving them of that rest which can alone tranquillize the nervous system. There is something in that matin burst of music, followed by a shrill cheer from the boys of the borough, the only inhabitants yet up, that is very depressing.

The committee-rooms of each candidate are soon rife with black reports; each side has received fearful bulletins of the preceding night campaign; and its consequences as exemplified in the morning, unprecedented tergiversations, mysterious absences; men who breakfast with one side and vote with the other; men who won't come to breakfast; men who won't leave breakfast.

At ten o'clock Mr. Rigby was in a majority of twenty-eight.

The polling was brisk and very equal until the middle of the day, when it became very slack. Mr. Rigby kept a majority, but an inconsiderable one. Mr. Millbank's friends were not disheartened, as it was known that the leading members of Mr. Rigby's Committee had polled; whereas his opponent's were principally reserved. At a quarter past two there was great cheering and uproar. The four voters in favour of Millbank whom Solomon Lacey had cooped up, made drunk, and carried into the country, had recovered their senses, made their escape, and voted as they originally in-

tended. Soon after this, Mr. Millbank was declared by his Committee to be in a majority of one, but the Committee of Mr. Rigby instantly posted a placard in large letters to announce that on the contrary their man was in a majority of nine.

"If we could only have got another registration," whispered the principal agent to Mr. Rigby at a quarter past four.

"You think it's all over then?"

"Why I do not see now how we can win. We have polled all our dead men, and Millbank is seven a head."

"I have no doubt we shall be able to have a good petition," said the consoling chairman of the Conservative Association.

CHAPTER V.

It was not with feelings of extreme satisfaction that Mr. Rigby returned to London. The loss of Hellingsley, followed by the loss of the borough to Hellingsley's successful master, were not precisely the incidents which would be adduced as evidence of Mr. Rigby's good management or good fortune. Hitherto that gentleman had persuaded the world that he was not only very clever, but that he was also always in luck; a quality which many appreciate more even than capacity. His reputation was unquestionably damaged both with his patron and his party. But what the Tapers and the Tad-

poles thought or said, what even might be the injurious effect on his own career of the loss of his election, assumed an insignificant character when compared with its influence on the temper and disposition of the Marquess of Monmouth.

And yet his carriage is now entering the court-yard of Monmouth House, and in all probability a few minutes would introduce him to that presence before which he had ere this trembled. The Marquess was at home, and anxious to see Mr. Rigby. In a very few minutes that gentleman was ascending the private staircase, entering the antechamber, and waiting to be received in the little saloon, exactly as our Coningsby did more than five years ago, scarcely less agitated, but by feelings of a very different character.

"Well, you made a good fight of it," exclaimed the Marquess in a cheerful and particularly cordial tone, as Mr. Rigby entered his dressing-room. "Patience! We shall win next time."

This reception instantly re-assured the de-

feated candidate, though its contrast to that which he expected, rather perplexed him. He entered into the details of the election, talked rapidly of the next registration, the propriety of petitioning; accustomed himself to hearing his voice with its habitual volubility in a chamber where he had feared it might not sound for some time.

"D——n politics!" said the Marquess. "These fellows are in for this parliament, and I am really weary of the whole affair. I begin to think the Duke was right, and it would have been best to have left them to themselves. I am glad you have come up at once, for I want you. The fact is, I am going to be married."

This was not a startling announcement to Mr. Rigby; he was prepared for it, though scarcely could have hoped that he would have been favoured with it on the present occasion, instead of a morose comment on his misfortunes. Marriage then was the predominant idea of Lord Monmouth at the present moment, in whose absorbing interest all vexations were

forgotten. Fortunate Rigby! Disgusted by the failure of his political combinations, his disappointments in not dictating to the county and not carrying the borough, and the slight prospect at present of obtaining the great object of his ambition, Lord Monmouth had resolved to precipitate his fate, was about to marry immediately, and quit England.

"You will be wanted, Rigby," continued the Marquess. "We must have a couple of trustees, and I have thought of you as one. You know you are my executor; and it is better not to bring in unnecessarily new names into the management of my affairs. Lord Eskdale will act with you."

Rigby then, after all, was a lucky man. After such a succession of failures, he had returned only to receive fresh and the most delicate marks of his patron's good feeling and consideration. Lord Monmouth's trustee and executor! "You know you are my executor." Sublime truth! It ought to be blazoned in letters of gold in the most conspicuous part of Rigby's library, to remind him perpetually

of his great and impending destiny. Lord Monmouth's executor, and very probably one of his residuary legatees! A legatee of some sort he knew he was. What a splendid memento mori! What cared Rigby for the borough of Darlford? And as for his political friends, he wished them joy of their barren benches. Nothing was lost by not being in this Parliament.

It was then with sincerity that Rigby offered his congratulations to his patron. He praised the judicious alliance, accompanied by every circumstance conducive to worldly happiness; distinguished beauty, perfect temper, princely rank. Rigby, who had hardly got out of his hustings' vein, was most eloquent in his praises of Madame Colonna.

"A very amiable woman," said Lord Monmouth, "and very handsome. I always admired her; and a very agreeable person too; I dare say a very good temper, but I am not going to marry her."

"Might I then ask who is—"

"Her step-daughter, the Princess Lucretia,"

replied the Marquess very quietly, and looking at his ring.

Here was a thunderbolt! Rigby had made another mistake. He had been working all this time for the wrong woman! The consciousness of being a trustee alone sustained him. There was an inevitable pause. The Marquess would not speak however, and Rigby must. He babbled rather incoherently about the Princess Lucretia being admired by every body; also that she was the most fortunate of women, as well as the most accomplished; he was just beginning to say he had known her from a child, when discretion stopped his tongue, which had a habit of running on somewhat rashly; but Rigby, though he often blundered in his talk, had the talent of extricating himself from the consequence of his mistakes.

"And Madame must be highly gratified by all this?" observed Mr. Rigby with an inquiring accent. He was dying to learn how she had first received the intelligence, and congratulated himself that his absence at his contest had preserved him from the storm.

"Madame Colonna knows nothing of our intentions," said Lord Monmouth. "And by the bye, that is the very business on which I wished to see you, Rigby. I wish you to communicate them to her. We are to be married, and immediately. It would gratify me that the wife of Lucretia's father should attend our wedding. You understand exactly what I mean, Rigby—I must have no scenes. Always happy to see the Princess Colonna under my roof; but then I like to live quietly, particularly at present; harassed as I have been by the loss of these elections, by all this bad management, and by all these disappointments on subjects in which I was led to believe success was certain. Madame Colonna is at home," and the Marquess bowed Mr. Rigby out of the room.

CHAPTER VI.

THE departure of Sidonia from Coningsby Castle in the autumn determined the Princess Lucretia on a step which had for some time before his arrival occupied her brooding imagination. Nature had bestowed on this lady an ambitious soul and a subtile spirit; she could dare much, and could execute finely. Above all things she coveted power; and though not free from the characteristic susceptibility of her sex, the qualities that could engage her passions or fascinate her fancy must partake of that intellectual eminence which distinguished her. Though the Princess Lucretia in a short

space of time had seen much of the world, she had as yet encountered no hero. In the admirers whom her rank, and sometimes her intelligence, assembled around her, her master had not yet appeared. Her heart had not trembled before any of those brilliant forms whom she was told her sex admired; nor did she envy any one the homage which she did not appreciate. There was therefore no disturbing element in the worldly calculations which she applied to that question which is to woman what a career is to man, the question of marriage. She would marry to gain power, and therefore she wished to marry the powerful. Lord Eskdale hovered around her, and she liked him. She admired his incomparable shrewdness; his freedom from ordinary prejudices, the selfishness which was always good-natured, and the imperturbability that was not callous. But Lord Eskdale had hovered round many; it was his easy habit. He liked clever women, young, but who had seen something of the world. The Princess Lucretia pleased him much; with the form and mind of a woman even in the nursery. He had watched

her development with interest; and had witnessed her launched in that world where she floated at once with as much dignity and consciousness of superior power, as if she had braved for seasons its waves and its tempests.

Musing over Lord Eskdale, the mind of Lucretia was drawn to the image of his friend; her friend; the friend of her parents. And why not marry Lord Monmouth? The idea pleased her. There was something great in the conception; difficult and strange. The result, if achieved, would give her all that she desired. She devoted her mind to this secret thought. She had no confidants. She concentrated her intellect on one point, and that was to fascinate the grandfather of Coningsby, while her stepmother was plotting that she should marry his grandson. The volition of Lucretia Colonna was, if not supreme, of a power most difficult to resist. There was something charm-like and alluring in the conversation of one who was silent to all others; something in the tones of her low rich voice which acted singularly on the nervous system. It was the voice of the

serpent; indeed there was an undulating movement in Lucretia when she approached you, which irresistibly reminded you of that mysterious animal.

Lord Monmouth was not insensible to the spell, though totally unconscious of its purpose. He found the society of Lucretia very agreeable to him; she was animated, intelligent, original; her inquiries were stimulating; her comments on what she saw, and heard, and read, racy and often indicating a fine humour. But all this was reserved for his ear. Before her parents as before all others, Lucretia was silent, a little scornful, never communicating, neither giving nor seeking amusement, shut up in herself.

Lord Monmouth fell therefore into the habit of riding and driving with Lucretia alone. It was an arrangement which he found made his life more pleasant. Nor was it displeasing to Madame Colonna. She looked upon Lord Monmouth's fancy for Lucretia as a fresh tie for them all. Even the Prince, when his wife called his attention to the circumstance, observed it with satisfaction. It was a circumstance

which represented in his mind a continuance of good eating and good drinking, fine horses, luxurious baths, unceasing billiards.

In this state of affairs appeared Sidonia, known before to her step-mother, but seen by Lucretia for the first time. Truly he came, saw, and conquered. Those eyes that rarely met anothers, were fixed upon his searching yet unimpassioned glance. She listened to that voice full of music, yet void of tenderness: and the spirit of Lucretia Colonna bowed before an intelligence that commanded sympathy, yet offered none.

Lucretia naturally possessed great qualities as well as great talents. Under a genial influence her education might have formed a being capable of imparting and receiving happiness. But she found herself without a guide. Her father offered her no love; her step-mother gained from her no respect. Her literary education was the result of her own strong mind and inquisitive spirit. She valued knowledge, and she therefore acquired it. But not a single moral principle or a single religious truth had

ever been instilled into her being. Frequent absence from her own country had by degrees broken off even an habitual observance of the forms of her creed; while a life of undisturbed indulgence, void of all anxiety and care, while it preserved her from many of the temptations to vice, deprived her of that wisdom "more precious than rubies" which adversity and affliction, the struggles and the sorrows of existence, can alone impart.

Lucretia had passed her life in a refined, but rather dissolute society. Not indeed that a word that could call forth a maiden blush, conduct that could pain the purest feelings, could be heard or witnessed in those polished and luxurious circles. The most exquisite taste pervaded their atmosphere; and the uninitiated who found themselves in those perfumed chambers and those golden saloons, might believe from all that passed before them, that their inhabitants were as pure, as orderly, and as irreproachable as their furniture. But among the habitual dwellers in these delicate halls, there was a tacit understanding, a prevalent doctrine

that required no formal exposition, no proofs and illustrations, no comment and no gloss; which was indeed rather a traditional conviction than an imparted dogma; that the exoterick public were on many subjects the victims of very vulgar prejudices, which these enlightened personages wished neither to disturb nor to adopt.

A being of such a temper, bred in such a manner; a woman full of intellect and ambition, daring and lawless, and satiated with prosperity, is not made for equable fortunes and an uniform existence. She would have sacrificed the world for Sidonia, for he had touched the fervent imagination that none before could approach, but that inscrutable man would not read the secret of her heart; and prompted alike by pique, the love of power, and a weariness of her present life, Lucretia resolved on that great result which Mr. Rigby is now about to communicate to the Princess Colonna.

About half an hour after Mr. Rigby had entered that lady's apartments it seemed that all the bells of Monmouth House were ringing

at the same time. The sound even reached the Marquess in his luxurious recess, who immediately took a pinch of snuff and ordered his valet to lock the door of the ante-chamber. The Princess Lucretia too heard the sounds; she was lying on a sofa in her boudoir reading the Inferno and immediately mustered her garrison in the form of a French maid, and gave directions that no one should be admitted. Both the Marquess, and his intended bride, felt that a crisis was at hand, and resolved to participate in no scenes.

The ringing ceased; there was again silence. Then there was another ring; a very short, hasty, and violent pull; followed by some slamming of doors. The servants, who were all on the alert and had advantages of hearing and observation denied to their secluded master, caught a glimpse of Mr. Rigby endeavouring gently to draw back into her apartments Madame Colonna, furious amid his deprecatory exclamations.

"For Heaven's sake, my dear Madame; for your own sake—now really—now I assure

you—you are quite wrong—you are indeed—it is a complete misapprehension—I will explain everything. I entreat—I implore—whatever you like—just what you please—only listen."

Then the lady with a mantling visage and flashing eye, violently closing the door, was again lost to their sight. A few minutes after, there was a more moderate ring and Mr. Rigby coming out of the apartments, with his cravat a little out of order as if he had had a violent shaking, met the servant who would have entered.

"Order Madame Colonna's travelling carriage," he exclaimed in a loud voice, "and send Mademoiselle Conrad here directly. I don't think the fellow hears me," added Mr. Rigby and following the servant, he added in a low tone and with a significant glance, "no travelling carriage; no Mademoiselle Conrad; order the britska round as usual."

Nearly another hour passed; there was another ring; very moderate indeed. The servant was informed that Madame Colonna was coming down; and she appeared as usual. In

a beautiful morning dress, and leaning on the arm of Mr. Rigby she descended the stairs, and was handed into her carriage by that gentleman, who seating himself by her side, ordered them to drive to Richmond.

Lord Monmouth having been informed that all was calm, and that Madame Colonna attended by Mr. Rigby, had gone to Richmond, ordered his carriage, and accompanied by Lucretia and Lucian Gay, departed immediately for Blackwall, where in white bait, a quiet bottle of claret, the society of his agreeable friends, and the contemplation of the passing steamers, he found a mild distraction and an amusing repose.

Mr. Rigby reported that evening to the Marquess on his return, that all was arranged and tranquil. Perhaps he exaggerated the difficulties, to increase the service; but according to his account they were very considerable. It required some time to make Madame Colonna comprehend the nature of his communication. All Rigby's diplomatic skill was expended in the gradual development. When it was once fairly put before her, the effect was appalling. That was

the first great ringing of bells. Rigby softened a little what he had personally endured; but he confessed she sprang at him like a tigress baulked of her prey, and poured forth on him a volume of epithets, many of which Rigby really deserved. But after all in the present instance he was not treacherous, only base, which he always was. Then she fell into a passion of tears, and vowed frequently that she was not weeping for herself, but only for that dear Mr. Coningsby, who had been treated so infamously and robbed of Lucretia, and whose heart she knew must break. It seemed that Rigby stemmed the first violence of her emotion by mysterious intimations of an important communication that he had to make; and piquing her curiosity, he calmed her passion. But really having nothing to say, he was nearly involved in fresh dangers. He took refuge in the affectation of great agitation which prevented exposition. The lady then insisted on her travelling carriage being ordered, and packed, as she was determined to set out for Rome that afternoon. This little occurrence gave Rigby some few

minutes to collect himself, at the end of which he made the Princess several announcements of intended arrangements, all of which pleased her mightily, though they were so inconsistent with each other, that if she had not been a woman in a passion, she must have detected that Rigby was lying. He assured her almost in the same breath, that she was never to be separated from them, and that she was to have any establishment in any country she liked. He talked wildly of equipages, diamonds, shawls, opera boxes; and while her mind was bewildered with these dazzling objects, he with intrepid gravity consulted her as to the exact amount she would like to have apportioned, independent of her general revenue, for the purposes of charity.

At the end of two hours, exhausted by her rage and soothed by these visions, Madame Colonna, having grown calm and reasonable, sighed and murmured a complaint, that Lord Monmouth ought to have communicated this important intelligence in person. Upon this Rigby instantly assured her, that Lord Monmouth had been for some time waiting to do

so, but in consequencc of her lengthened interview with Rigby, his Lordship had departed for Richmond with Lucretia, where he hoped that Madame Colonna and Mr. Rigby would join him. So it ended, with a morning drive and suburban dinner; Rigby, after what he had gone through, finding no difficulty in accounting for the other guests not being present, and bringing home Madame Colonna in the evening, at times almost as gay and good-tempered as usual, and almost oblivious of her disappointment.

When the Marquess met Madame Colonna, he embraced her with great courtliness, and from that time consulted her on every arrangement. He took a very early occasion of presenting her with a diamond necklace of great value. The Marquess was fond of making presents to persons to whom he thought he had not behaved very well, and who yet spared him scenes.

The marriage speedily followed by special licence at the villa of the Right Hon. Nicholas Rigby, who gave away the bride. The wedding

party was very select, but brilliant as the diamond necklace: a royal Duke and Duchess, Lady St. Julians, and a few others. Mr. Ormsby presented the bride with a bouquet of precious stones, and Lord Eskdale with a French fan in a diamond frame. It was a fine day; Lord Monmouth, calm as if he were winning the St. Leger; Lucretia, universally recognized as a beauty; all the guests gay, the Princess Colonna especially.

The travelling-carriage is at the door which is to bear the happy pair away. Madame Colonna embraces Lucretia; the Marquess gives a grand bow: they are gone. The guests remain awhile. A Prince of the blood will propose a toast; there is another glass of champagne quaffed, another ortolan devoured; and then they rise and disperse. Madame Colonna leaves them with Lady St. Julians, whose guest for a while she is to become. And in a few minutes their host is alone.

Mr. Rigby retired into his library: the repose of the chamber must have been grateful to his feelings after all this distraction. It was spa-

cious, well-stored, classically adorned, and opened on a beautiful lawn. Rigby threw himself into an ample chair, crossed his legs, and resting his head on his arm, apparently fell into deep contemplation.

He had some cause for reflection, and though we did once venture to affirm that Rigby never either thought or felt, this perhaps may be the exception that proves the rule.

He could scarcely refrain from pondering over the strange event which he had witnessed, and had assisted.

It was an incident that might exercise considerable influence over his fortunes. His patron married, and married to one who certainly did not offer to Mr. Rigby such a prospect of easy management as her step-mother! Here were new influences arising; new characters, new situations, new contingencies. Was he thinking of all this? He suddenly jumps up, hurries to a shelf and takes down a volume. It is his interleaved peerage, of which for twenty years he had been threatening an edition. Turning to the Marquisate of Monmouth, he took

up his pen and thus made the necessary entry.

"*Married, second time, August 3rd.* 1837, *The Princess Lucretia Colonna, daughter of Prince Paul Colonna, born at Rome, February 16th.* 1819.

That was what Mr. Rigby called "a great fact." There was not a peerage compiler in England who had that date save himself.

Before we close this slight narrative of the domestic incidents that occurred in the family of his grandfather since Coningsby quitted the castle, we must not forget to mention what happened to Villebecque and Flora. Lord Monmouth took a great liking to the manager. He found him very clever in many things independently of his profession; he was useful to Lord Monmouth, and did his work in an agreeable manner. And the future Lady Monmouth was accustomed to Flora, and found her useful too, and did not like to lose her. And so the Marquess turning all the circumstances in his mind, and being convinced that Villebecque could never succeed,

to any extent in England in his profession, and probably no where else, appointed him, to Villebecque's infinite satisfaction, Intendant of his household with a considerable salary, while Flora still lived with her kind step-father.

CHAPTER VII.

ANOTHER year elapsed; not so fruitful in incidents to Coningsby as the preceding ones, and yet not unprofitably passed. It had been spent in the almost unremitting cultivation of his intelligence. He had read deeply and extensively, digested his acquisitions, and had practised himself in surveying them, free from those conventional conclusions and those traditionary inferences that surrounded him. Although he had renounced his once cherished purpose of trying for University honours, an aim which he found discordant with the investigations on which his mind was bent, he had rarely quitted Cambridge. The society of his friends, the great convenience of public libraries, and the general

tone of studious life around, rendered an University for him a genial residence. There is a moment in life, when the pride and thirst of knowledge seem to absorb our being, and so it happened now to Coningsby, who felt each day stronger in his intellectual resources, and each day more anxious and avid to increase them. The habits of public discussion fostered by the Debating Society were also for Coningsby no inconsiderable tie to the University. This was the arena in which he felt himself at home. The promise of his Eton days was here fulfilled. And while his friends listened to his sustained argument or his impassioned declamation; the prompt reply or the apt retort; they looked forward with pride through the vista of years to the time when the hero of the youthful Club should convince or dazzle in the senate. It is probable then that he would have remained at Cambridge with slight intervals until he had taken his degree, had not circumstances occurred which gave altogether a new turn to his thoughts.

When Lord Monmouth had fixed his wedding-day he had written himself to Coningsby to announce his intended marriage, and to request

his grandson's presence at the ceremony. The letter was more than kind; it was warm and generous. He assured his grandson that this alliance should make no difference in the very ample provision which he had long intended for him; that he should ever esteem Coningsby his nearest relative; and that while his death would bring to Coningsby as considerable an independence as an English gentleman need desire, so in his lifetime, Coningsby should ever be supported as became his birth, breeding, and future prospects. Lord Monmouth had mentioned to Lucretia, that he was about to invite his grandson to their wedding, and the lady had received the intimation with satisfaction. It so happened that a few hours after, Lucretia who now entered the private rooms of Lord Monmouth without previously announcing her arrival, met Villebecque with the letter to Coningsby in his hand. Lucretia took it away from him, and said it should be posted with her own letters. It never reached its destination. Our friend learnt the marriage from the newspapers, which somewhat astounded him; but Coningsby was fond of his grandfather, and he wrote

Lord Monmouth a letter of congratulation, full of feeling and ingenuousness, and which, while it much pleased the person to whom it was addressed, unintentionally convinced him that Coningsby had never received his original communication. Lord Monmouth spoke to Villebecque, who could throw sufficient light upon the subject, but it was never mentioned to Lady Monmouth. The Marquess was a man who always found out everything, and enjoyed the secret.

Rather more than a year after the marriage, when Coningsby had completed his twenty-first year, the year which he had passed so quietly at Cambridge, he received a letter from his grandfather, informing him that after a variety of movements Lady Monmouth and himself were established in Paris for the season, and desiring that he would not fail to come over as soon as was practicable, and pay them as long a visit as the regulations of the University would permit. So, at the close of the December term, Coningsby quitted Cambridge for Paris.

Passing through London, he made his first visit to his banker at Charing Cross, on whom he had periodically drawn since he commenced

his college life. He was in the outer counting-house, making some inquiries about a letter of credit, when one of the partners came out from an inner room, and invited him to enter. This firm had been for generations the bankers of the Coningsby family; and it appeared that there was a sealed box in their possession which had belonged to the father of Coningsby, and they wished to take this opportunity of delivering it to his son. This communication deeply interested him; and as he was alone in London, at an hotel, and on the wing for a foreign country, he requested permission at once to examine it, in order that he might again deposit it with them: so he was shown into a private room for that purpose. The seal was broken; the box was full of papers, chiefly correspondence: among them was a packet described as letters from "my dear Helen," the mother of Coningsby. In the interior of this packet, there was a miniature of that mother. He looked at it; put it down: looked at it again and again. He could not be mistaken. There was the same blue fillet in the bright hair. It was an

exact copy of that portrait which had so greatly excited his attention when at Millbank! This was a mysterious and singularly perplexing incident. It greatly agitated him. He was alone in the room when he made the discovery. When he had recovered himself, he sealed up the contents of the box, with the exception of his mother's letters and the miniature, which he took away with him, and then re-delivered it to his banker for custody until his return.

Coningsby found Lord and Lady Monmouth in a splendid hotel in the Faubourg St. Honoré, near the English embassy. His grandfather looked at him with marked attention, and received him with evident satisfaction. Indeed Lord Monmouth was greatly pleased that Harry had come to Paris; it was the University of the World, where everybody should graduate. Paris and London ought to be the great objects of all travellers; the rest was mere landscape.

It cannot be denied that between Lucretia and Coningsby there existed from the first a certain antipathy; and though circumstances

for a short time had apparently removed or modified the aversion, the manner of the lady when Coningsby was ushered into her boudoir, resplendent with all that Parisian taste and luxury could devise, was characterized by that frigid politeness which had preceded the days of their more genial acquaintance. If the manner of Lucretia were the same as before her marriage, a considerable change might however be observed in her appearance. Her fine form had become more developed; while her dress, that she once totally neglected, was elaborate and gorgeous, and of the last mode. Lucretia was the fashion at Paris; a great lady, greatly admired. A guest under such a roof however, Coningsby was at once launched into the most brilliant circles of Parisian society, which he found fascinating.

The art of society is, without doubt, perfectly comprehended and completely practised in the bright metropolis of France. An Englishman cannot enter a saloon without instantly feeling he is among a race more social than his compatriots. What, for example, is more consummate than

the manner in which a French lady receives her guests! She unites graceful repose and unaffected dignity, with the most amiable regard for others. She sees every one; she speaks to every one; she sees them at the right moment; she says the right thing. It is utterly impossible to detect any difference in the position of her guests by the spirit in which she welcomes them. There is, indeed, throughout every circle of Parisian society, from the "château" to the "cabaret," a sincere homage to intellect; and this without any maudlin sentiment. None sooner than the Parisians can draw the line between factitious notoriety and honest fame; or sooner distinguish between the counterfeit celebrity and the standard reputation. In England we too often alternate between a supercilious neglect of genius and a rhapsodical pursuit of quacks. In England, when a new character appears in our circles, the first question always is, "Who is he?" In France it is, "What is he?" In England, "How much a-year?" In France, "What has he done?"

CHAPTER VIII.

ABOUT a week after Coningsby's arrival in Paris, as he was sauntering on the soft and sunny Boulevards, soft and sunny though Christmas, he met Sidonia.

"So you are here?" said Sidonia. "Turn now with me, for I see you are only lounging, and tell me when you came, where you are, and what you have done since we parted. I have been here myself but a few days."

There was much to tell. And when Coningsby had rapidly related all that had passed, they talked of Paris. Sidonia had offered him hospitality, until he learned that Lord Mon-

mouth was at Paris, and that Coningsby was his guest.

"I am sorry you cannot come to me," he remarked; "I would have shown you every body and every thing. But we shall meet often."

"I have already seen many remarkable things," said Coningsby; "and met many celebrated persons. Nothing more strikes me in this brilliant city than the tone of its society, so much higher than our own. What an absence of petty personalities! How much conversation, and how little gossip! Yet no where is there less pedantry. All women here as agreeable as is the remarkable privilege in London of some half dozen. Men too, and great men, develope their minds. A great man in England on the contrary is generally the dullest dog in company. And yet how piteous to think that so fair a civilisation should be in such imminent peril."

"Yes! that is a common opinion; and yet I am somewhat sceptical of its truth," replied Sidonia. "I am inclined to believe that the social system of England is in infinitely greater danger

than that of France. We must not be misled by the agitated surface of this country. The foundations of its order are deep and sure. Learn to understand France. France is a Kingdom with a Republic for its capital. It has been always so, for centuries. From the days of the League to the days of the Sections, to the days of 1830. It is still France, little changed; and only more national; for it is less Frank and more Gallic; as England has become less Norman and more Saxon."

"And it is your opinion then, that the present King may maintain himself?"

"Every movement in this country, however apparently discordant, seems to tend to that inevitable end. He would not be on the throne if the nature of things had not demanded his presence. The Kingdom of France required a Monarch; the Republic of Paris required a Dictator. He comprised in his person both qualifications; lineage and intellect; blood for the provinces, brains for the city."

"What a position! what an individual!" exclaimed Coningsby. "Tell me," he added

eagerly, "what is he? This Prince of whom one hears in all countries at all hours; on whose existence we are told the tranquillity, almost the civilisation, of Europe depends, yet of whom we receive accounts so conflicting, so contradictory; tell me, you who can tell me, tell me what he is?"

Sidonia smiled at his earnestness. "I have a creed of mine own," he remarked, "that the great characters of antiquity are at rare epochs re-produced for our wonder, or our guidance. Nature, wearied with mediocrity, pours the warm metal into an heroic mould. When circumstances at length placed me in the presence of the King of France, I recognised—ULYSSES!"

"But is there no danger," resumed Coningsby, after the pause of a few moments, "that the Republic of Paris may absorb the Kingdom of France?"

"I suspect the reverse," replied Sidonia. "The tendency of advanced civilisation is in truth to pure Monarchy. Monarchy is indeed a government which requires a high degree of civilisation for its full development. It needs the support

of free laws and manners, and of a widely diffused intelligence. Political compromises are not to be tolerated except at periods of rude transition. An educated nation recoils from the imperfect vicariate of what is called a representative government. Your House of Commons, that has absorbed all other powers in the State, will in all probability fall more rapidly than it rose. Public opinion has a more direct, a more comprehensive, a more efficient organ for its utterance, than a body of men sectionally chosen. The Printing Press is a political element unknown to classic or feudal times. It absorbs in a great degree the duties of the Sovereign, the Priest, the Parliament; it controls, it educates, it discusses. That public opinion when it acts would appear in the form of one who has no class interests. In an enlightened age the Monarch on the throne, free from the vulgar prejudices and the corrupt interests of the subject, becomes again divine!"

At this moment they reached that part of the Boulevard which leads into the Place of the Madeleine, whither Sidonia was bound; and

Coningsby was about to quit his companion, when Sidonia said:

"I am only going to step over to the Rue Tronchet to say a few words to a friend of mine, M. P——s. I shall not detain you five minutes; and you should know him, for he has some capital pictures, and a collection of Limoges ware that is the despair of the dilettanti."

So saying they turned down by the Place of the Madeleine, and soon entered the court of the hotel of M. P——s. That gentleman received them in his gallery. After some general conversation, Coningsby turned towards the pictures, and left Sidonia with their host. The collection was rare; and interested Coningsby, though unacquainted with art. He sauntered on from picture to picture until he reached the end of the gallery, where an open door invited him into a suite of rooms also full of pictures, and objects of curiosity and art. As he was entering a second chamber, he observed a lady leaning back in a cushioned chair, and looking earnestly on a picture. His entrance was un-

heard and unnoticed, for the lady's back was to the door; yet Coningsby advancing in an angular direction, obtained nearly a complete view of her countenance. It was upraised, gazing on the picture with an expression of delight; the bonnet thrown back, while the large sable cloak of the gazer had fallen partly off. The countenance was more beautiful than the beautiful picture. Those glowing shades of the gallery to which love, and genius, and devotion had lent their inspiration, seemed without life and lustre by the radiant and expressive presence which Coningsby now beheld.

The finely arched brow was a little elevated, the soft dark eyes were fully opened, the nostril of the delicate nose slightly dilated, the small, yet rich, full, lips just parted; and over the clear transparent visage there played a vivid glance of gratified intelligence.

The lady rose, advanced towards the picture, looked at it earnestly for a few moments, and then turning in a direction opposite to Coningsby, walked away. She was somewhat above the middle stature, and yet could scarcely

be called tall; a quality so rare, that even skilful dancers do not often possess it, was hers; that elastic gait that is so winning, and so often denotes the gaiety and quickness of the spirit.

The fair object of his observation had advanced into other chambers, and as soon as it was becoming, Coningsby followed her. She had joined a lady and gentleman, who were examining an ancient carving in ivory. The gentleman was middle-aged and portly; the elder lady tall and elegant, and with traces of interesting beauty. Coningsby heard her speak; the words were English, but the accent not of a native.

In the remotest part of the room, Coningsby apparently engaged in examining some of that famous Limoges ware of which Sidonia had spoken, watched with interest and intentness the beautiful being whom he had followed, and whom he concluded to be the child of her companions. After some little time, they quitted the apartment on their return to the gallery; Coningsby remained behind, caring for none

of the rare and fanciful objects that surrounded him, yet compelled, from the fear of seeming obtrusive, for some minutes to remain. Then he too returned to the gallery, and just as he had gained its end, he saw the portly gentleman in the distance shaking hands with Sidonia, the ladies apparently expressing their thanks and gratification to M. P——s, and then all vanishing by the door through which Coningsby had originally entered.

"What a beautiful countrywoman of yours!" said M. P——s, as Coningsby approached him.

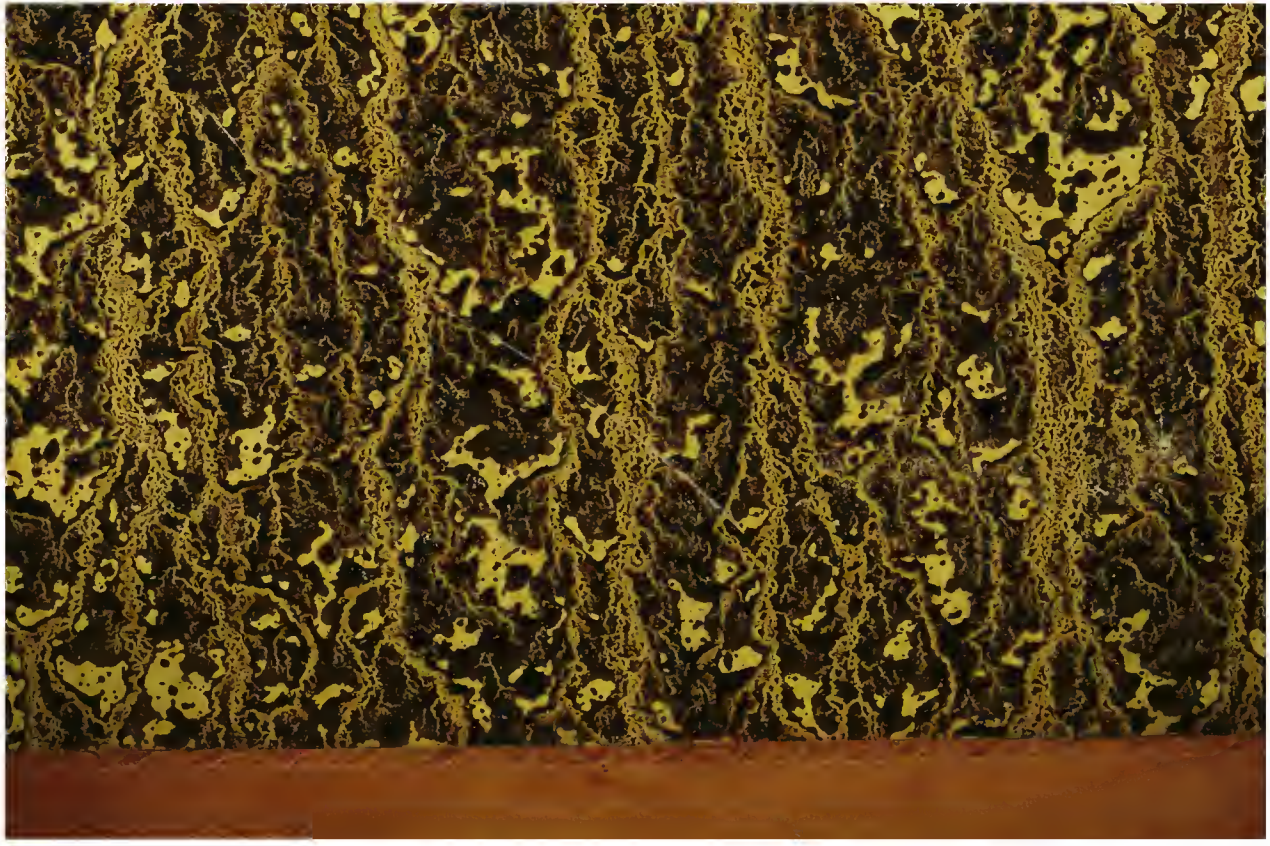
"Is she my countrywoman! I am glad to hear it; I have been admiring her," he replied.

"Yes," said M. P——s, "it is Sir Wallinger; one of your deputies; don't you know him?"

"Sir Wallinger!" said Coningsby, "no, I have not that honour." He looked at Sidonia.

"Sir Joseph Wallinger," said Sidonia, "one of the new Whig baronets, and member for ——

I know him. He married a Spaniard. That is not his daughter but his niece; the child of his wife's sister. It is not easy to find any one more beautiful."

END OF VOL. II.

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